

HERCULES AND AUGUSTUS

Propertius 4.9: A Political Reading

Michael Berry (B.A. Hons.)

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‘somniabam cum scriberem hoc, sic ignosce mihi si errabit’

Princeps, mcmxcix

Abstract

This thesis offers a political reading of Propertius 4.9 – Propertius’ account of Hercules’ arrival at the site of future Rome. Specifically, it argues that the ninth elegy in Propertius’ fourth book provides a critique of Augustan propaganda surrounding the Battle of Actium (31 BC), the ensuing triple triumph (29 BC) and Augustus’ later attempts at social, moral and poetic censorship.

Central to the argument is the nature and extent of the relationship between Hercules and Augustus and Hercules’ status as a paradigm for the *princeps*. Accordingly, the thesis begins with an investigation of this association, firstly, by examining the sources and, secondly, by analysing the affinity between 4.9 and the *Aeneid* – particularly the eighth book – where Hercules assumes such an exemplary role. Detailed readings of the elegy follow. The first word, *Amphitryoniades*, is examined closely as it sets the tone for the elegy as a whole and reaffirms Hercules’ status as a model for Augustus. The first episode of the elegy – Hercules’ conflict with Cacus – is then subjected to a close reading from the perspective that it functions as an allegorical representation of the Battle of Actium and, finally, Hercules’ encounter with the worshippers of Bona Dea – the elegy’s second episode – is given close attention. It is argued that this final episode offers a critique of Augustus’ legislative reforms – namely the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of 18 BC.

The thesis thus reveals a hitherto overlooked critique of Augustus’ rise to power and his attempts at social, moral and poetic censorship.

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Introduction

Propertius 4.9 offers an intriguing account of Hercules' arrival at the site of future Rome on his return from the successful mission to capture the cattle of Geryon. Upon Hercules' advent, a local resident, the monstrous Cacus, steals some of Hercules' cattle and is, accordingly, slain for his efforts, whereupon Hercules recovers the herd and founds the Ara Maxima to commemorate the rescue operation. Then, stricken by a great thirst following his exertions, he sets off in search of a drink and pleads for entry to the grove of Bona Dea and access to the spring within. When refused entry on the grounds that men are forbidden to witness the rites of Bona Dea or access the grove's water, he attempts to persuade the priestess of the rites to allow him entry by recounting the tale of his time spent in servitude to the Lydian Queen, Omphale, when he dressed as a woman and performed women's work. The priestess, however, is unmoved by his pleas, whereupon Hercules shoulders aside the door, enters the sacred grove and drains the spring dry. Finally, in retaliation for being refused water, he excludes women from worship at the Ara Maxima.

The complexities of this elegy have encouraged many diverse interpretations. W. S. Anderson was the first to begin to fully appreciate the intricacies when he noted the elegy's strong (thematically) elegiac context and, in particular, Hercules' resemblance to the *exclusus amator*.¹ Furthermore, he remarked upon the enjambment and/or incongruity of elegiac and epic themes within the elegy and, henceforth, issues of genre have figured prominently in other readings.² Additionally, analysis of the poem has focused on the similarities and divergences between Propertius' account of Hercules' conflict with Cacus and that offered by Virgil in *Aeneid* 8.³ Hercules' cross-dressing, his desecration of the rites of Bona Dea and his subsequent prohibition of female worship at the Ara

¹ Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus: Propertius, IV, 9,' *AJP* 85, 1964, 1-12.

² Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus', Cairns, F., 'Propertius 4.9: "Hercules Exclusus" and the Dimensions of Genre.' in *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* K. Galinsky (Ed.), P. Lang (Pub.), Frankfurt am Main, 1992, 65-95 and Anderson, W. S., 'The Limits of Genre: A Response to Francis Cairns.' in *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* K. Galinsky (Ed.), P. Lang (Pub.), Frankfurt am Main, 1992, 96-103.

³ See, most notably, Warden, J., 'Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4.9.70f.' *Hermes* 110, 1982, 228-42.

Maxima have been seen as indicative of the elegy's concern with gender and sexual segregation.⁴ More recently, there has been focus on fixed categories and definitions of gender and the unstable nature of gender identity in this elegy.⁵ Concepts of binarisms (most notably in relation to gender and genre), oppositional classification and the limits of such categorisations have also been explored.⁶ Alternatively, there has been historical focus on gender and segregation of the sexes with interpretation in terms of sexual separation of religious institutions, restoration of shrines and religious and moral programmes.⁷ More specifically, there has been focus on the origin and nature of the celebration of rites at the Ara Maxima and within the cult of Bona Dea.⁸ Moreover, the elegy has been seen as reflecting a Propertian critique of Augustan promotion of definitive or privileged versions of mythology and the mythmaking process in more general terms.⁹

Without discounting the above interpretations, in this thesis I offer an unashamedly political reading. Any treatment of political issues associated with the reign of Augustus, however, needs to be aware of the problems associated with, and created by, the terms 'Augustan', 'pro-Augustan' and 'anti-Augustan'.¹⁰ I do not wish to enter the debate and, accordingly, I do not use the terms 'pro-Augustan' or 'anti-Augustan'. I do,

⁴ Fox, M., 'Transvestite Hercules at Rome.' in *In/visibility: Gender and Representation in a European Context*. R. Cleminson and M. Allison (Eds.), University of Bradford Press, Bradford, 1988, 1-21.

⁵ Lindheim, S. H., 'Hercules Cross-Dressed, Hercules Undressed: Unmasking the Construction of the Propertian Amator in Elegy 4.9.' *AJP* 119, 1998, 43-66. Janan, M. W., 'Refashioning Hercules: Propertius 4.9.' *Helios* 25, 1998, 65-77.

⁶ Debrohun, J. B., 'Redressing Elegy's *Puella*: Propertius IV and the Rhetoric of Fashion.' *JRS* 84, 1994, 41-63. This article is based on her Ph.D. dissertation, 'Hercules Belabored: Propertius 4.9 and the Discourses of Elegy.' University of Michigan, 1992, and appears also in the form of chapter four in Debrohun, J. B., *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003, pp. 156-200. Janan, 'Refashioning Hercules', and chapter eight 'Hercules in Rome' in Janan, M. W., *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, pp. 129-45.

⁷ Rothwell, K. S., 'Propertius on the Site of Rome.' *Latomus* 55, 1996, 829-54, especially pp. 842f., Fox, M., 'Propertius 4.9 and the Toils of Historicism.' *MD* 43, 1999, 157-76, and Welch, T. S., 'Masculinity and Monuments in Propertius 4.9.' *AJP* 125, 2004, 61-90. Welch's article also appears (largely) in the form of chapter 5 in Welch, T. S., *The Elegiac Cityscape. Propertius and the Meaning of Roman Monuments*. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2005, pp. 113-32.

⁸ Holleman, A. W. J., 'Propertius IV 9: An Augustan View of Roman Religion.' *RBPh* 55, 1977, 79-92.

⁹ Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in Elegy 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, 259-284.

¹⁰ The utility of these terms has been questioned most notably by Kennedy, D. F., "'Augustan" and "anti-Augustan": Reflections on Terms of Reference.' in *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*. A. Powell (Ed.), Bristol Classical Press, London, 1992, 26-58. For a rebuttal of Kennedy's position, see Davis, P. J., "'Since my part has been well played": Conflicting Evaluations of Augustus.' *Ramus* 28, 1999, 1-15.

nonetheless, use ‘Augustan’, neither pejoratively nor positively, but in a temporal sense – to refer to the period of his rule – or to refer to Augustus, himself – that is, pertaining to, or associated with Augustus. From a political perspective, then, Propertius’ treatment of Hercules’ conflict with Cacus – the first episode in this elegy – offers a critique of the construction and promotion of a definitive or authoritative version of events surrounding the battle of Actium and the (moral) characterisation of the combatants in that conflict, while the second episode – Hercules’ encounter with the worshippers of Bona Dea – provides a critique of Augustus’ attempts at moral legislation and poetic and sexual censorship.

Central to my argument is Hercules’ status as a paradigm for Augustus and thus the first three chapters are concerned with establishing the nature of the relationship between Hercules and Augustus (Chapter One), the extent of the association between 4.9 and the *Aeneid* – particularly the eighth book – where Hercules assumes such an exemplary role (Chapter Two) and the importance of the first word, *Amphitryoniades*, that sets the tone for the elegy as a whole by announcing Hercules’ paradigmatic status and signalling the elegy’s relationship with *Aeneid* 8 (Chapter Three). The final chapters provide detailed readings of the elegy’s two episodes – Hercules’ conflict with Cacus (Chapter Four) and his attempts to gain access to the grove of Bona Dea (Chapter Five).

Propertius 4.9, then, when approached from the above perspective, offers an intriguing and illuminating account of Hercules’ arrival at Rome, his conflict with Cacus and his attempts to access the grove of Bona Dea.

Propertius 4.9

Amphitryoniades qua tempestate iuuenos
 egerat a stabulis, o Erythea, tuis,
 uenit ad inuictos pecorosa Palatia montis,
 et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues,
 qua Velabra suo stagnabant flumine quoque 5
 nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas.
 sed non infido manserunt hospite Caco
 incolumes: furto polluit ille Iouem.
 incola Cacus erat, metuendo raptor ab antro,
 per tria partitos qui dabat ora sonos. 10
 hic, ne certa forent manifestae signa rapinae,
 auersos cauda traxit in antra boues,
 nec sine teste deo: furem sonuere iuueni,
 furis et implacidas diruit ira fores.
 Maenali iacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo 15
 Cacus, et Alcides sic ait: 'Ite boues,
 Herculis ite boues, nostrae labor ultime clauae,
 bis mihi quaesitae, bis mea praeda, boues,
 aruaque mugitu sancite Bouaria longo:
 nobile erit Romae pascua uestra Forum.' 20
 dixerat, et sicco torquet sitis ora palato,
 terraque non nullas feta ministrat aquas.
 sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,
 lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus,

The text is based on that of Fedeli, P., *Sexti Properti Elegarium Liber IV*. B. G. Teubner (Pub.), Stuttgart, 1994 – textual divergences are noted; differences in punctuation are not. The translation is my own.

5 quaque 8 incolumis 22 [n]ullas 25 fontesque

femineae loca clausa deae fontisque piandos, 25
 impune et nullis sacra resecta uiris.
 deuia puniceae uelabant limina uitae,
 putris odorato luxerat igne casa,
 populus et longis ornabat frondibus aedem,
 multaue cantantis umbra tegebat auis. 30
 huc ruit in siccam congesta puluere barbam,
 et iacit ante fores uerba minora deo:
 ‘Vos precor, o luci sacro quae luditis antro,
 pandite defessis hospita fana uiris.
 fontis egens erro, circaque sonantia lymphis; 35
 et caua suscepto flumine palma sat est.
 audistisne aliquem, tergo qui sustulit orbem?
 ille ego sum: Alciden terra recepta uocat.
 quis facta Herculeae non audit fortia clauae
 et numquam ad uastas irrita tela feras, 40
 atque uni Stygias homini luxisse tenebras?
 - - - - - 42
 angulus hic mundi nunc me mea fata trahentem 65
 accipit: haec fesso uix mihi terra patet. 66
 quodsi Iunoni sacrum faceretis amarae, 43
 non clausisset aquas ipsa nouerca suas.
 sin aliquem uultusque meus saetaeque leonis 45
 terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma,
 idem ego Sidonia feci seruilia palla
 officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,
 mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus,
 et manibus duris apta puella fui.’ 50
 talibus Alcides; at talibus alma sacerdos,

puniceo canas stamine uincta comas:
 ‘Parce oculis, hospes, lucoque abscede uerendo;
 cede agedum et tuta limina linque fuga.
 interdicta uiris metuenda lege piatur 55
 quae se summota uindicat ara casa.
 magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada uates,
 fortia dum posita Gorgone membra lauat.
 di tibi dent alios fontis: haec lympa puellis
 auia secreti limitis una f<l>uit.’ 60
 sic anus: ille umeris postis concussit opacos,
 nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim.
 at postquam exhausto iam flumine uicerat aestum,
 ponit uix siccis tristia iura labris: 64
 ‘Maxima quae gregibus deuota est Ara repertis, 67
 ara per has’ inquit ‘maxima facta manus,
 haec nullis umquam pateat ueneranda puellis,
 Herculis aeternum ne sit inulta sitis.’ 70
 hunc, quoniam manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem, 73
 sic Sancum Tatiae composuere Cures. 74
 sancte pater salue, cui iam fauet aspera Iuno: 71
 Sance, uelis libro dexter inesse meo. 72

What time the steers Amphitryoniades
 Had driven from your fold, O Erythea,
 He came to the sheepy Palatine, unconquered hill,
 And he settled his weary cattle, himself also weary,
 Where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow and where
 The sailor used to glide through urban waters.
 But with Cacus a treacherous host, they did not remain

Safe: that man dishonoured Jove with his theft.
 Cacus was the resident, a robber from a fearful cave,
 Who uttered sounds shared between three mouths.
 He, lest there be sure signs of the flagrant theft,
 Backwards by the tail he dragged the cows into the cave;
 Not without a god as witness: the cattle cried 'Thief!'

And anger smashed down the thief's hostile doors.
 He lies dead, his tri-brows smote by the Maenalian branch,
 Cacus, and Alcides spoke thus: 'Go cattle,
 Go cattle of Hercules, final labour of my club,
 Twice sought by me, twice my booty, cattle,
 Hallow the Bovarian fields with a long low:
 Your pasture will be Rome's noble Forum.'
 He spoke, and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth,
 And the teeming earth offers no little water.
 But elsewhere he hears hidden girls laughing,
 Where a sacred grove had made a wood in a shady ring,
 An enclosed place of the female goddess and a reverend spring,
 And sacred rites revealed to no man with impunity.
 Purple fillets were covering the secluded threshold;
 A weathered hut had been lit by scented fire
 And a poplar adorned the shrine with its long foliage
 And dense shade covered singing birds.
 He rushes here with dust caked upon his dry beard
 And he hurls before the doors words demeaning a god:
 'I beg you, O you who play in the sacred hollow of the grove,
 Open your hospitable shrine to a weary man.
 I wander lacking a spring and around is the sound of water;
 Even a cupped palm caught from the stream is enough.
 You have heard of one who bore the globe on his back?
 I am he: the world I carried calls me Alcides.

Who has not heard of the brave deeds of Hercules' club
 And of arrows never shot in vain at huge beasts,
 And how the Stygian gloom lit up for one human?

- - - - -

Me dragging my fate, this corner of the world now
 Receives: weary as I am, this land scarcely welcomes me.
 But if you were making sacrifice to spiteful Juno,
 My very stepmother would not have closed her waters.
 But if anyone my appearance and lion's mane
 Terrifies and my hair bleached by the Libyan sun,
 I, too, in a Sidonian robe, carried out a slave's
 Duties and the daily burden upon a Lydian distaff
 And a soft bra bound my hairy chest
 And I was a proper girl with hard hands.'
 Alcides thus; but thus the kindly priestess,
 Her white hair bound with purple thread:
 'Spare your eyes, stranger, and depart this reverend grove;
 Go at once and leave the threshold in safe flight.
 Forbidden to men and hallowed by a fearful law
 Is the altar which protects itself in a secluded hut.
 At great cost did the seer, Tiresias, look upon Pallas
 While she bathed her brave limbs with the Gorgon set aside.
 May the gods grant you other springs: this water for girls
 Alone, set apart with secret channel, flows.'
 Thus the old woman: he forced the shady posts with his shoulder;
 The closed door bore not his angry thirst.
 But after he had subdued his heat with the stream now drained,
 He put in place stern laws with lips scarcely dry:
 'The Ara Maxima, which was vowed for my flock recovered,
 Was', he said, 'made the greatest altar through these hands;
 This must never be open to be worshipped by any girl,

Lest Hercules' thirst be forever unavenged.'

Him, since he had sanctified the world cleansed by his hands,

Tatius' Cures thus established as Sancus.

Hail, Holy Father, to whom cruel Juno now shows favour:

Sancus, may you wish to dwell favourably in my book.

CHAPTER ONE:

Hercules and Augustus

Although Augustus himself left us no lasting monument as testimony to the political import or significance of Hercules, as he did with, for example, the statues of Romulus and Aeneas in the Forum of Augustus,¹ Hercules was, nevertheless, an important Augustan symbol who was, at times, personally associated with the *princeps*. This chapter explores the relationship, both literary and otherwise, between Hercules and Augustus.

An association between Hercules and Augustus is not altogether unexpected or unjustified and, indeed, there is some degree of evidential correlation between Hercules and the emperor.² Both had returned victorious from Spain – the former had successfully defeated Geryon and captured his cattle; the latter had returned from a successful Spanish campaign in 24 BC.³ Each was presented as a *diui filius* ('son of a god') and as a god in waiting who (eventually) achieved divinity through virtue and worldly labours.⁴

¹ From the Temple of Apollo, dedicated by Augustus in 28 BC, a terracotta plaque depicts Hercules and Apollo holding the tripod; the political relevance – if, indeed, there was any – is unproven. What is clear, however, is that in a temple dedicated to the *princeps*' great patron deity, Apollo is depicted opposite and not alongside Hercules and both gods have their weapons drawn. This oppositional presentation seems to me unlikely to represent any alignment of Augustus with Hercules, but rather suggests the opposite; see Galinsky, K., *Augustan Culture*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, pp. 222-24. For a concise overview of Aeneas, Romulus and the Forum of Augustus, see Zanker, P., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1988, pp. 201-05.

² Fox, M., *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 170, speaks of a 'natural factual similarity'. Galinsky, K., *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey, p. 139, claims that Augustus and Hercules have the same 'spiritual qualities'.

³ See, for example, Horace, *Odes* 3.14 and Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 140.

⁴ *Aeneid* 8 makes much of the notion of *labor* ('labour, toil') to forge a link between Hercules and Augustus (via Aeneas). See, for example, Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, p. 170 and Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 128-35. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 140, claims that deification for 'services to mankind' was a notion that was familiar in Rome as evidenced by Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.14.32. Note that Galinsky gives the reference as 1.33. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. von, *Euripides. Herakles*. Weidmann, Berlin, 1895, p. 38, says of Hercules: 'Mensch gewesen, Gott geworden; Mühen erduldet, Himmel erworben.' ('Born a (hu)man, he became a god; endured labours, he attained heaven'.) This biography could be applied equally to Augustus – see Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 5. Other equations that can be drawn between Hercules and Augustus include the conquest of an Egyptian ruler – Hercules killed Busiris when he attempted to sacrifice Hercules to Zeus (Herodotus 2.45) and their status as saviours of the world, peace-bringers and civilisers. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 149, notes the civilising influence

The association between Augustus and Hercules is, however, almost without exception, literary – there is no firm evidence to suggest that the *princeps* promoted any connection or association between himself and Hercules. The only hint of official sanction or promotion of a union is perhaps discernible in the decision to hold the triple triumph of 29 BC immediately following the annual celebration of the festival of Hercules at Rome.

The annual celebration of Hercules' defeat of Cacus and founding of the Ara Maxima took place on 12 August at the Ara Maxima itself in the Forum Boarium.⁵ Octavian entered the city of Rome on 13 August 29 BC, thereby beginning his three day triple triumph.⁶ Was this juxtaposition merely coincidental, or should it be seen as a deliberate attempt by the future *princeps* to associate himself with Hercules?

Many have seen the enjambment of the two occasions as a deliberately orchestrated campaign by Octavian – in fact, this is the majority view. W. S. Anderson claims that Octavian chose to align his triple triumph with the occasion of the celebration of the founding of the Ara Maxima in order to forge a link between himself and Hercules – reason enough, he claims, for the Augustan writers to link Hercules with Augustus.⁷ Wyke contends that Hercules became a symbol of the Roman state and its *princeps* as a result of, together with literary associations, Octavian holding his triple triumph at the same time as Hercules' official festival.⁸ Galinsky claims that Octavian's decision to hold his triple triumph, celebrating, among other victories, his victory over Antony and Cleopatra, to coincide with the day of Hercules' annual festival at the Ara Maxima was a

of Hercules. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 1.41.1) depicts Hercules as a pacifying, liberating and civilising hero who builds cities, other infrastructure and drains swamps; Cassius Dio (51.18-20) describes Octavian in similar terms. For the association formed by Egyptian conquest, see Kraggerud, E., 'Vergil Announcing the *Aeneid*. On *Georgics* 3.1-48.' in *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*. H.-P., Stahl (Ed.), Duckworth, London, 1988, p. 6. For Hercules' status as a god in waiting, see Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 4-6.

⁵ For the date and festival of the celebration of the founding of the Ara Maxima, see Warde Fowler, W., *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic*. Macmillan and Co., London, 1899, pp. 193-97 and Scullard, H. H., *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1981, pp. 171-73. For a detailed study of the Forum Boarium and its monuments, see Coarelli, F., *Il Foro Boario: dalle origini alla fine della Repubblica*. Quasar, Rome, 1988.

⁶ For the dates of Augustus' triple triumph, see Ehrenberg, V. and Jones, A. H. M., *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*. (Second Edition). Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1955, p. 50.

⁷ Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus: Propertius, IV, 9.' *AJP* 85, 1964, p. 2. Note that Anderson thinks that Augustus began his triple triumph on 12 August.

⁸ Wyke, M., *The Roman Mistress*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 136-37. Her discussion of Hercules in relation to *Amores* 3.1 begins on p. 130.

deliberate attempt to usurp Antony's association with Hercules and his proposed adoption by Julius Caesar.⁹ Fox claims that the decision to associate the two celebrations was 'the final and most durable move in the concerted propaganda campaign against Antonius.'¹⁰ Kraggerud asserts that Octavian synchronised his triumphant return to Rome with the celebration of Hercules in the Forum Boarium in order to 'emphasise his claim to be the new Hercules.'¹¹ Janan speaks of Octavian's alignment of himself and his regime with the myth of Hercules at Rome.¹² The juxtaposition of the two events has, then, been interpreted as a deliberate attempt by Octavian to create or encourage an explicit connection between himself and Hercules.

Most recently, Welch advances this position and attests supporting evidence.¹³ Octavian, she claims, on August 12, 29 BC – the day preceding his triple triumph – entered Rome and personally celebrated Hercules' rites at the Ara Maxima.¹⁴ If this is the case, then the argument for a deliberate association by the *princeps* is strengthened on the grounds that here we have evidence of deliberate action by Octavian rather than mere temporal juxtaposition of events, which in itself proves nothing. Unfortunately, the reference for this assertion does not support the claim that Octavian attended the rites at the Ara Maxima, but merely provides evidence of the date of Hercules' celebration.¹⁵

⁹ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 141. Galinsky contends that Hercules' annual festival and the celebration of the victory at Actium during Octavian's triple triumph both took place on 13 August and that Octavian's scheduling was 'hardly accidental'. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 139, however, seemingly contradicting himself, asserts that 'there is no indication that Augustus promoted his connection with Herakles.' For the supposed descent of the Antonii from Hercules, see Gurval, R. A., *Actium and Augustus. The Politics and Emotions of Civil War*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 92. For Antony's attempts to associate himself with Hercules, see Pelling, C. B. R., *Plutarch: Life of Antony*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, n. 2, p. 124. For Julius Caesar's proposed adoption of Antony, see Appian, *BC* 3.16.

¹⁰ Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, p. 170. Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in *Elegy* 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, pp. 262-63, agrees that Octavian probably wanted to get rid of Hercules' Antonian connections.

¹¹ Kraggerud, p. 5.

¹² Janan, M. W., *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 129, claims that Octavian's alignment of himself and his regime with Hercules is a possible subject for 'poking fun at' in Propertius 4.9.

¹³ Welch, T. S., 'Masculinity and Monuments in Propertius 4.9.' *AJP* 125, 2004, 61-90. See especially the section entitled 'Monuments and Morality: The *Princeps*, Hercules, and the Ara Maxima', pp. 64-68. This article also appears (largely) in the form of chapter 5 in Welch, T. S., *The Elegiac Cityscape. Propertius and the Meaning of Roman Monuments*. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2005, pp. 113-32.

¹⁴ Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', p. 64.

¹⁵ The reference provided by Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', n. 10, p. 64, refers to the Fasti Amiterni (see *CIL* 1.244). We might wonder if Octavian would have wished to enter Rome as a citizen the day before his triumphant parade in full military garb.

Welch does, however, point to Servius to support her claim that the coincidence of the events was engineered by Octavian. She states, 'Octavian's scheduling was deliberate and shrewd. Servius calls it *eu)su)mboloj* (=feliciter, *ad. Aen.* 8.102)'.¹⁶ In fact, Servius uses *eu)sumbo/lwj* (here, 'auspiciously', 'with good omen') in reference to the advent of Aeneas and the Trojans at the site of future Rome during Evander and his followers' celebration of Hercules' rites.¹⁷ Upon the arrival of the Trojans, Virgil writes:

forte die sollemnem illo rex Arcas honorem
 Amphitryoniadae magno diuisque ferebat
 ante urbem in luco. (*Aen.* 8.102-04)

By chance, on that day, solemn honour the Arcadian king
 Was paying to mighty Hercules and to the gods
 In a grove before the city.¹⁸

Servius remarks that Evander was paying homage *eu)sumbo/lwj* on that day because it portended well for the Trojans (*id est bono omine uictori deo Troianis uenientibus sacra celebrantur*, 'It is with good omen that the rites are being celebrated to a victorious god when the Trojans arrive', *ad Aen.* 8.102).¹⁹ There is no mention whatsoever of Octavian. Welch's assertions, then, rest upon unsubstantiated claims.

Huttner, however, contends that there is no evidence to suggest that Octavian promoted such a connection and that the temporal contiguity of the celebration of Hercules' festival and Octavian's triple triumph was purely coincidental; sickness, he claims, delayed Octavian's return to Rome.²⁰ Accordingly, the date of Octavian's arrival at Rome need not carry the significance that some wish to ascribe to it; the date may have been simply determined by Octavian's health and ability to suffer the long journey from the East rather than any attempt to ensure that his return coincided with Hercules'

¹⁶ Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', p. 64. Note that Servius uses *eu)sumbo/lwj*, not *eu)su)mboloj* – *eu)sumbo/lwj* corresponds with the adverb *feliciter*.

¹⁷ Servius, *ad Aen.* 8.102.

¹⁸ All translations are my own.

¹⁹ Servius, *ad Aen.* 8.102.

²⁰ Huttner, U., 'Hercules und Augustus.' *Chiron* 27, 1997, pp. 369-70.

festival. In short, he may simply have returned to Rome as soon as he was able. Presumably, if he had not fallen ill, he would have been able to return earlier.

If Octavian had always intended to arrive in Rome on 13 August, what would have been the consequence of him falling sick, delaying his arrival, and missing the date altogether? If this date was critical to a concerted propaganda campaign by Octavian to align himself with Hercules, would he simply wait for the same date in the following year? This seems unlikely. And why, then, is there no concrete evidence of such a propaganda campaign if Octavian was so keen to promote the association? Octavian, in fact, had much to attend to in the East before his triumphant return to Rome. He founded a city, Nicopolis, and established games there in commemoration of his eastern successes and he oversaw irrigation works before travelling via Syria to the province of Asia, where he wintered and attended to the affairs of the nearby nations and Parthia, where there had been an uprising against the ruling king.²¹ It seems more likely that the completion of Octavian's eastern affairs and his ill health determined the time of his return to Rome rather than any desire to delay his arrival to coincide with the celebration of Hercules' festival – perhaps, even, there were other possibilities for this choice of date.

Although upon his arrival at the outskirts of Rome the occasion of the celebration of Hercules' festival may have presented Octavian with the opportunity to associate his triumph with these rites, whether he would have wished to promote any association with Hercules at such a time might be questioned. Galinsky, as we have seen, thinks that Octavian wished to arrogate Antony's associations with Hercules and Julius Caesar, yet any attempt by Octavian to associate himself with Hercules at this time would recall these very associations.²² Given that Octavian wished to promote his victory at Actium as a successful foreign campaign rather than a civil war with Antony and that the question of succession was still a sensitive issue, we might consider whether Octavian would have welcomed, let alone promoted, such an association at this time.²³

Whatever the case, it is likely that Octavian was aware of the date and the celebrations of Hercules' festival; yet if he was so keen to associate himself with

²¹ Cassius Dio, 51.18.

²² Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 141.

²³ For the absence of any reference to Antony or any other Romans who had been defeated along with him from imperial announcements and propaganda surrounding Actium, see Cassius Dio, 51.19.2.

Hercules, he might have entered the city on the same day as his festival. It might be argued that Octavian waited until the festival of Hercules had concluded precisely because he did not want to be associated with Hercules. Most likely, Octavian would have held his triple-triumph whenever he returned to Rome.²⁴ The fact that the festival of Hercules was in process would have been of little consequence. Perhaps he was not averse to comparisons with the great hero, Hercules – great generals from at least the time of Alexander had been associated with him – but with no strong association with the Julii, Hercules would never be a central figure in Augustan propaganda.²⁵ While we must conclude, then, that Octavian was aware of the juxtaposition of events, this need not suggest that the *princeps* wished to promote an association between himself and Hercules.

A. R. Anderson, citing inscriptional evidence, claims that the cult of Augustus was linked with the cult of Hercules at Tibur.²⁶ He is supported in this claim by Galinsky, who adds that this link appears to have been present in Augustus' own time.²⁷ As evidence of a further connection between the *princeps* and Hercules at Tibur, Suetonius tells us (*Aug.* 72) that Augustus administered justice in that town from the colonnades of Hercules' temple. Again, while such 'evidence' may, indeed, constitute some sort of link between the *princeps* and Hercules, there is no suggestion that this association was in any way promoted or encouraged by Augustus.

Yet such an association did, indeed, exist, if the works of the Augustan poets are any indication.²⁸ Horace provides us with the most explicit poetic comparisons of Hercules and Augustus. *Odes* 3.3 finds Augustus reclining in heaven among those demigods who achieved divinity through virtue and mortal deeds:

²⁴ Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', pp. 64-65, argues that Octavian delayed his advent in Rome to coincide with the celebration of Hercules' rites by 'lingering for four days in Atella while Vergil read the *Georgics* to him.' See Suetonius *Vit. Verg.* 27. While this may be the case, it should be noted that neither Suetonius nor Donatus (who quotes Suetonius at length, *Vit. Verg.* 91) mentions this as a reason for delay – they both state the need for throat treatment as the cause.

²⁵ For the association of great generals with Hercules, see Anderson, A. R., 'Hercules and His Successors. A Study of a Heroic Ideal and the Recurrence of a Heroic Type.' *HSCP* 39, 1928, pp. 37f.

²⁶ Anderson, A. R., p. 45.

²⁷ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 139-40.

²⁸ Anderson, A. R., pp. 44-45, details many of the poetic associations.

iustum et tenacem propositi uirum
 non ciuium ardour praua iubentium,
 non uoltus instantis tyranni
 mente quatit solida neque Auster,

dux inquieti turbidus Hadriae,
 nec fulminantis magna manus Iouis.
 si fractus inlabatur orbis,
 inpavidum ferient ruinae.

hac arte Pollux et uagus Hercules
 enisus arcis attigit igneas,
 quos inter Augustus recumbens
 purpureo bibet ore nectar.

(*Odes* 3.3.1-12)

A man just and tenacious of purpose
 Neither the passion of citizens demanding wrongs,
 Nor the appearance of a pressing tyrant
 Shakes in his firm mind, nor the South Wind,

The turbulent leader of the restless Adriatic,
 Nor the great hand of bolt-bearing Jove.
 Should the world crumble and collapse,
 The ruins will strike him undaunted.

By this art, Pollux and wandering Hercules
 Strived for and reached the fiery heights,
 Between whom a reclining Augustus
 Will drink nectar with purple mouth.

Horace, by placing Augustus – still very much alive at the time of this ode²⁹ – in the *arces igneae* (3.3.9-10), among those who gained their place by their worldly actions, signals Augustus' inevitable deification.³⁰ Castor and Pollux, Romulus, Bacchus and Hercules, the five demigods who achieved divine status through virtue and earthly deeds,³¹ are all mentioned by Horace – mention is made of Romulus and Bacchus in the four lines that follow the passage quoted above – with the exception of Castor, who is, nevertheless, recalled here by mere mention of Pollux, his twin. Textually, however, it is Hercules' name that immediately precedes that of Augustus, thereby suggesting a close relationship between the two. Here, then, we have Augustus explicitly associated and compared with Hercules.

Another of Horace's *Odes* offers direct comparison of the deeds of Hercules and Augustus. *Odes* 3.14 compares Augustus' successful campaign in Spain in 24 BC with Hercules' defeat of Geryon and the capture of his cattle, which Hercules pastured at (future) Rome on his return journey:³²

Herculis ritu modo dictus, o plebs,
 morte uenalem petiisse laurum
 Caesar Hispana repetit Penatis
 uictor ab ora. (*Odes* 3.14.1-4)

Said just now in the manner of Hercules, O plebs,
 To have sought the laurel won by death,
 Caesar returns to his Penates from the Spanish
 Shore victorious.

²⁹ *Odes* 1-3 were most likely published in 23 BC. For the dating of Horace's *Odes*, see Quinn, K., *Horace: The Odes*. Macmillan Education, Basingstoke, 1980, pp. XII and 215-16.

³⁰ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 138, asserts that this is the intent of both Horace and Virgil when they link Hercules with Augustus. Such a claim seems justified when applied to Horace, yet, as we shall see, it is not Virgil's primary aim in drawing a comparison between Augustus and Hercules.

³¹ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 140, calls them 'services to mankind'.

³² For a brief discussion of Horace's role in establishing an association between Hercules and Augustus, see Lee, G., *Propertius. The Poems*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p. xvi.

The comparison could hardly be more direct or explicit than *Herculis ritu* – Augustus is said to have returned from Spain as a victor, just as Hercules once did. In fact, Horace suggests that the comparison between Augustus and Hercules seems to have been well enough established to have been remarked upon at the time (*modo dictus*, ‘spoken of only recently’, 3.14.1).³³

In *Odes* 4.5, Horace compares the worship of the emperor – the cult of Augustus – with that of Hercules (and Castor):

condit quisque diem collibus in suis
et uitem uiduas ducit ad arbores;
hinc ad uina redit laetus et alteris
te mensis adhibet deum:

te multa prece, te prosequitur mero
defuso pateris, et Laribus tuum
miscet numen, uti Graecia Castoris
et magni memor Herculis.

(*Odes* 4.5.29-36)

Whoever spends the day on his hills
And leads the vine to the barren branches;
He returns happy to the wine and at the second
Table he worships you as a god:

He honours you with many a prayer and with wine
Poured from the bowls and to the Lares your
Name he adds, just as Greece does remembering
Castor and mighty Hercules.

³³ For the points of contact between Augustus and Hercules in *Odes* 3.14, see West, D., *Horace: Odes III*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, pp. 126-27.

Just as the Greeks recognised Castor and Hercules in their prayers, the Romans (*condit quisque diem collibus suis*, 4.5.29), too, worship Augustus as a god. Castor and Pollux achieved their places in heaven due to worldly virtue and toil and by inference Augustus deserves to rank alongside them for the same reasons. Again, the association between Augustus and Hercules, made, it seems, in order to foreshadow Augustus' predestined deification, is explicit.

On one more occasion Horace explicitly links Augustus with Hercules. *Epistle* 2.1 compares the deeds and (future) deification of the *princeps* – to whom the first four lines make it clear that this letter is addressed – and Hercules:

cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus
 res Italas armis tuteris, moribus ornes,
 legibus emendes, in publica commoda peccem,
 si longo sermone morer tua tempora, Caesar.
 Romulus et Liber pater et cum Castore Pollux,
 post ingentia facta deorum in templa recepti,
 dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aspera bella
 componunt, agros assignant, oppida condunt,
 plorauere suis non respondere fauorum
 speratum meritis. diram qui contudit hydram
 notaque fatali portenta labore subegit,
 comperit inuidiam supremo fine domari.
 urit enim fulgore suo qui praeagrauat artis
 infra se positas, extinctus amabitur idem.
 praesenti tibi maturos largimur honores,
 iurandasque tuum per numen ponimus aras,
 nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale fatentes. (Epistle 2.1.1-17)

Since you shoulder so many great responsibilities alone,
 You guard the Italian state with arms, furnish her with morals,
 Reform her with laws, against the public interest I should sin,

If by a long sermon I were to waste your time, Caesar.
 Romulus and father Liber and Pollux with Castor,
 Received after their great deeds into the temples of the gods,
 While the earth and mankind they cared for, cruel wars
 They settled, lands they assigned, towns they founded,
 They bemoaned that the recognition longed for
 Did not match their deserts. He who crushed the dire Hydra
 And subdued famous monsters with fated labour,
 Found that envy is mastered [only] by the final end.
 For he flames with his own brilliance, he who outweighs
 Talents set beneath him; extinguished he too will be loved.
 Upon you while present we bestow timely honours,
 We set up altars to swear by in your divinity,
 Asserting that none such as you will rise or has ever risen.

Although the fourth book of the *Odes* and *Epistle* 2.1 are likely to have been published around 13 BC, the fact that they continue a series of associations between the *princeps* and Hercules made by Horace dating back to a time well before the publication of Propertius' fourth book makes it relevant as evidence of a firm and lasting association. In this 'letter', the comparison between Augustus and Hercules begins almost at once, with the initial metaphor of Augustus carrying many burdens (*sustineas et tanta negotia*, 2.1.1) immediately recalling Hercules' labours.³⁴ Augustus is, again, compared to the list of demigods who attained divinity through *ingentia facta* (2.1.6). Unlike the others, however, Augustus will be given his due honours while he is alive and present (*praesens*, 2.1.15) upon the earth. Furthermore, while Romulus, Bacchus, Castor and Pollux are simply listed by name in a single line (2.1.5), Hercules is accorded special mention in a description occupying five lines (2.1.10-14).³⁵ The comparison, here, between Hercules and Augustus, then, is granted special prominence.

³⁴ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 139, claims that the analogy continues for the following three lines.

³⁵ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 139.

That the association was an enduring one is further evidenced by Ovid's apposition and comparison of the deeds and deification of Hercules and Augustus in *Fasti* – a work composed and written some three decades or more after the publication of Horace's *Odes* 1-3.³⁶ While the association in the first book of *Fasti* might be less explicit than any found in Horace, it is nonetheless evident. Inserted between Carmentis' prophecy of Aeneas' arrival at the site of future Rome (*Fasti* 1.527-28) and the divine rule of Augustus and the Julian *gens* (*Fasti* 1.529-536) and narration of the greatness of Augustus and his deeds (*Fasti* 1.587-616) is the tale of Hercules' defeat of Cacus and founding of the Ara Maxima (*Fasti* 1.543-586). This juxtaposition alone is enough to suggest an association, yet the connection is reinforced by the similarities of the imagery surrounding Hercules and the *princeps*.

Descendants of the Julian *gens* travelled far from Troy to arrive at the site of (future) Rome:

iam pius Aeneas sacra et, sacra altera, patrem
adferet: Iliacos accipe, Vesta, deos. (*Fasti* 1.527-28)

Soon, sacred objects and something else sacred, his father, pious Aeneas
Will arrive with: admit the gods of Ilium, Vesta.

Hercules, too, endured a long journey to arrive at the same location:

ecce boues illuc Erytheidas applicat heros
emensus longi clauiger orbis iter. (*Fasti* 1.543-44)

Behold, the Erytheian kine are driven thither by the heroic
Club-bearer, having traversed the length of the world.

³⁶ The work was most likely underway in some form or another at the time of Ovid's exile in 8 AD, yet contains some references to the accession of Tiberius in 14 AD (*Fasti* 1.533 and 615). For the dating of *Fasti*, see Syme, R., *History in Ovid*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978, pp. 21-36.

There is a further connection between Augustus and Hercules made by the prophecy of their deification. Hercules – according to Evander’s mother, the prophetess Carmentis – will undergo deification when his earthly deeds are completed:

nec tacet Euandri mater prope tempus adesse
Hercule quo tellus sit satis usa suo. (Fasti 1.583-84)

Evander’s mother did not fail to mention that the time was nearly here
When the earth would have had enough use of its Hercules.

Just a few lines later, it is suggested that Augustus, himself, will also receive divine honours – Augustus was, of course, a *diui filius*:

sed tamen humanis celebrantur honoribus omnes,
hic socium summo cum Ioue nomen habet. (Fasti 1.607-08)

But yet all the men [just mentioned] were feted with human honours,
He [Augustus] has a name akin to highest Jove.

Another point of comparison in *Fasti* is made by the references to the burden that each must bear. When Hercules breaks down the entrance to Cacus’ cave during his battle with the cattle thief, we are reminded that he once shouldered the burden (*onus*) of the world:

nititur hic umeris (caelum quoque sederat illis),
et uastum motu conlabefactat onus. (Fasti 1.565-66)

He shoves it with his shoulders (the sky also had sat on these),
And he knocks down the huge obstacle with the push.

Augustus and his successors must, too, Ovid tells us, bear such a burden (*onus*):

auspicibusque deis tanti cognominis heres
omine suscipiat, qou pater, orbis onus. (Fasti 1.615-16)

With the gods' auspices may the heir of so great a name [Augustus]
Bear the world's load with the same omen as his father.³⁷

Fasti, then, suggests that there was a well established and enduring association between Hercules and Augustus.

Another of Ovid's works – later still than *Fasti* – offers further testimony of a lasting literary association between the *princeps* and Hercules. In the fourth and final book of *Epistulae ex Ponto*, posthumously published perhaps in AD 17, Ovid claims that the gods owe something of their existence and fame to poetic verse:³⁸

di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt,
tantaque maiestas ore canentis eget. (ex Ponto 4.8.55-56)

The gods also, if it is right to say so, are created by verse;
Such great majesty needs the poet's voice.

The deified Hercules and Augustus – here the grandfather (*auus*) of Germanicus (*Caesar*) – are thus connected by the debt that they owe to poetry:

sic uictor laudem superatis Liber ab Indis,
Alcides capta traxit ab Oechalia.
et modo, Caesar, auum, quem uirtus addidit astris,
sacrarunt aliqua carmina parte tuum. (ex Ponto 4.8.61-64)

Thus renown from conquered India victorious Liber
Drew; Alcides from captured Oechalia.

³⁷ The imagery also recalls Aeneas' shouldering of his *Lares* ('household gods) and his father (*Fasti* 1.527-28). The association between Hercules, Aeneas and Augustus is a key theme of *Aeneid* 8.

³⁸ For the dating, see Syme, pp. 42f.

And now, Caesar, your grandfather, whom virtue added to the stars,
Did verse, to some extent, sanctify.

Ovid's connection of Hercules with Augustus, then, confirms the lasting association between Augustus and Hercules.

By far the lengthiest and most important comparison between Hercules and Augustus, however, is found in Virgil's *Aeneid*.³⁹ The eighth book provides the most detailed and complex examples of the association, yet other books also offer evidence of the comparison. During Aeneas' journey to the Underworld in the sixth book (6.236f.), Anchises points out to him the great men that will descend from the Dardan line (6.752f.), culminating in a retrospective prophecy of the greatness of Augustus and his realm:⁴⁰

hic uir, hic est, tibi quem prommitti saepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet
saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arua
Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos
proferet imperium; iacet extra sidera tellus,
extra anni solisque uias, ubi caelifer Atlas
axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.
huius in aduentum iam nunc et Caspia regna
responsis horrent diuum et Maeotia tellus,
et septemgemini turbant trepida ostia Nili. (Aen. 6.791-800)

This is the man, this is he, whom often you hear promised to you,
Augustus Caesar, born of a god, who will found a golden
Age again in Latium throughout the fields ruled
Once by Saturn, and who beyond the Garamantes and the Indians

³⁹ For a detailed examination of the thematic and symbolic imagery in Virgil's portrayal of the conflict between Cacus and Hercules and the paradigmatic status of the two combatants see, Galinsky, K., 'The Hercules-Cacus Episode in *Aeneid* VIII.' *AJP* 87, 1966, 18-51.

⁴⁰ Aeneas' journey to and from the Underworld in itself recalls a similar journey undertaken by Hercules in order to defeat Cerberus.

Will extend his power; the land [he will rule] lies beyond the stars,
 Beyond the paths of the year and sun, where sky-bearing Atlas
 Turns on his shoulder the sky fitted with blazing stars.
 Against his coming, now, already, the Caspian realms
 Tremble at the gods' oracular responses, and the Maeotian land too,
 And the mouths of sevenfold Nile reel full of fear.

The great Augustus will extend the empire to the ends of the known world and beyond. The extent of the realm will, in fact, surpass the total amount of land that Hercules ranged over during the fulfilment of his labours:

nec uero Alcides tantum telluris obiuit,
 fixerit aripedem ceruam licet, aut Erymanthi
 pacarit nemora, et Lernam tremefecerit arcu. (Aen. 6.801-03)

Nor, indeed, did Alcides traverse so much of the earth,
 Although he shot the bronze-footed deer, or in Erymanthus
 He pacified the woods, and made Lerna tremble at his bow.

Here, then, we have an explicit comparison of Hercules and Augustus – the power of both extended over much of the world. Indeed, the reference to Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders (Aen. 6.796-97) anticipates the comparison with Hercules, who, as we have seen, once bore this same load.

More common in the *Aeneid*, however, are indirect, or implicit, associations of the *princeps* and Hercules. The coincidence of Octavian's triple triumph and the celebration of Hercules' festival at Rome is highlighted by Virgil in order to signal the cognation. Virgil emphasises this connection when he makes specific mention of Potitius, the founder of the rites in celebration of Hercules' defeat of Cacus and founding of the Ara Maxima:

ex illo celebratus honos laetique minores

seruauere diem; primusque Potitius auctor
et domus Herculei custos Pinaria sacri. (Aen. 8.268-70)

Thence the rite has been celebrated and joyous descendants
Have kept the day; Potitius the first founder [of the rite]
And the Pinarian house, the custodian of Hercules' sacred rite.

Potitius is then mentioned again, this time in his role as the original leader of the celebratory procession:⁴¹

deuexo interea propior fit Vesper Olympo,
iamque sacerdotes primusque Potitius ibant,
pellibus in morem cincti, flammasque ferebant.
instaurant epulas et mensae grata secundae
dona ferunt cumulantque oneratis lancibus aras. (Aen. 8.280-84)

Meanwhile, Vesper comes nearer to sloping Olympus,⁴²
And now the priests led by Potitius go forth,
Girt, according to custom, by skins, and bearing torches.
The feast they resume and the delights of the second course
They bring and they pile the altars with loaded platters.

The association is confirmed by the fact that in 29 BC – the year of the concurrence of Octavian's triple triumph and the celebration of the festival of Hercules – Valerius Potitus, a member of the Potitii and quite possibly a direct descendant of the original founder of the rites of Hercules, was consul *suffectus*; indeed, Potitus and Octavian

⁴¹ Livy offers a similar account (1.7.12-15).

⁴² *Vesper* is 'evening' or, more accurately, the planet Venus, the Evening Star. Olympus, the home of the gods, here, represents the sky. For further discussion of the phrase, see Eden, P. T., *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*. Brill, Leiden, 1975, n. 280, p. 96 and Gransden, K. W., *Virgil Aeneid Book VIII*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, n. 280, p. 119.

shared the consulship for part of the year.⁴³ Moreover, Potitus offered sacrifice to the returning Octavian on behalf of the Roman people and the Senate – an unprecedented occurrence that Cassius Dio considered worthy of special mention (51.21) – just as his ancestor had once offered sacrifice to Hercules. The association here, then, while not as overt as those found in Horace, is nonetheless compelling.

A further parallel is found in the Virgil's description of the respective foes of Hercules and Octavian in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*. Cacus – the cattle thief defeated by Hercules in an epic battle – is called Vulcan's monstrous offspring:

huic monstro Volcanus erat pater ... (Aen. 8.198)

This monster's father was Vulcan ...

Compare this description with that of the gods that Octavian (together with Neptune, Venus and Minerva) overcomes in defeating Antony and Cleopatra at Actium:⁴⁴

omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis
contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Mineruam
tela tenent. (Aen. 8.698-700)

All kinds of monstrous gods and barking Anubis,
Against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva
Hold their weapons.

The linguistic parallels, here, provided by *monstro* and *monstra* (8.198 and 8.698), forge a link between the two victors – their foes are equally monstrous – thereby reinforcing the association between Hercules and Augustus.

⁴³ Cassius Dio (51.21) informs us that Potitus was, for some of the year, sharing the consulship with Octavian. For the connection between Potitius and Potitus, see Boyle, p. 150, Eden, n. 269f., p. 93, Gransden, n. 269-72, pp. 117-18, and Morgan, L., 'Assimilation and Civil War: Hercules and Cacus.' in *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*. H.-P. Stahl (Ed.), Duckworth, London, 1998, pp. 176-77.

⁴⁴ Boyle, p. 151, claims that Antony and Cleopatra might, by implication, be included among the *monstra*.

The description of Octavian's triumphant entry into Rome, as it appears on the Shield of Aeneas, also hints at a connection with Hercules:

at Caesar, triplici inuectus Romana triumpho
moenia, dis Italis uotum immortale sacrabat,
maxima ter centum totam delubra per urbem. (Aen. 8.714-116)⁴⁵

But Caesar, in triple triumph entering the Roman
Walls, was vowing his immortal gift to the Italian gods,
Three-hundred of the mightiest shrines throughout the city.

Octavian's arrival at Rome (*inuectus*, 8.714) recalls, by both visual and aural affinity, Virgil's description of Hercules as *inuictus* (*inuicte* 8.293) – a well known epithet of Hercules – and *uictor* (8.203 and 362). Indeed, Hercules' victorious arrival at (future) Rome, celebrating his own type of triple triumph – he had just defeated triple-headed Geryon – is brought to mind:

... nam maximus ultor,
tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus,
Alcides aderat taurosque hac uictor agebat
ingentis, uallemque boues amnemque tenebant. (Aen. 8.201-04)

... For the greatest avenger
Exultant in the death and spoils of triple Geryon,
Alcides, came, and victorious, led hither his huge
Bulls, and his cattle occupied the river-valley.

⁴⁵ Augustus, himself (*RG* 20) tells us that he founded or restored eighty-two temples throughout the city. For the significance of the exaggerated number of three-hundred, see Gransden, pp. 189-90 (Appendix A).

Similarly, Augustus' building and restoration of the *maxima delubra* (8.716), evokes Hercules' founding of the Ara Maxima:

hanc aram luco statuit, quae maxima semper
dicetur nobis et erit quae maxima semper. (Aen. 8.271-72)

He set in the grove this altar; the 'Greatest' forever
It will be called by us and the 'Greatest' it will be forever.

The repetition of *maxima*, stressed by its occupation of the fifth foot in each line, emphasises the point. Furthermore, *maxima* recalls Hercules' status as *maximus ultor* (8.201).

No less important than direct comparisons between Hercules and Augustus are those made via Aeneas – one of the most important and enduring figures in Augustan propaganda.⁴⁶ A strong connection existed between Augustus (and the Julii and their ancestry) and Aeneas – Aeneas first brought the ancestors of the Julii to Rome and Romulus, Julius and Augustus, himself, all sprang from his line, while the famed divinity of the Julii stemmed from their descent from Aeneas' mother Venus. His statue occupied pride of place facing that of Romulus in the Forum of Augustus – a forum that was Augustus' own creation, with a layout reflecting his ideals.⁴⁷ In addition, Aeneas' arrival at Latium is depicted to the right of the entrance of the Ara Pacis Augustae, erected in honour of Augustus' successful Gallic and Spanish campaigns.⁴⁸ There can be no doubting the importance of Aeneas as a central figure in Augustan ideology and, indeed, the story of Aeneas' travels, trials and tribulations, the *Aeneid*, was the most important and influential of all Roman poetic works.

⁴⁶ For an overview of the representation and importance of Aeneas in Augustan propaganda, see Zanker, pp. 201-10.

⁴⁷ Zanker, p. 195. For the layout and a brief description of the Forum of Augustus, see Zanker, pp. 194-95 and Luce, T. J., 'Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum.' in *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate*. K. A. Raafaub and M. Toher (Eds.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, p. 125.

⁴⁸ Zanker, pp. 120-21 and 203.

That Aeneas serves as a model for Augustus in the *Aeneid* and that a firm connection exists between the two men is reinforced on a number of occasions. Aeneas' helmet, when presented to him by Venus, miraculously emits flames:

terriblem cristis galeam flammasque uomentem. (Aen. 8.620)

His helmet, terrible with its crests, [was] spewing flames.

Again, as he faces the Rutulians, his helmet fires; this time accompanied by a flaming shield:

ardet apex capiti cristisque a uertice flamma
funditur et uastos umbo uomit aureus ignis. (Aen. 10.271-72)

The helmet on his head blazes and from the plumes on top a flame
Pours forth and his golden shield spews vast fires.

Compare the above descriptions with that of Augustus, as seen on the shield of Aeneas, as he surveys the scene at the battle of Actium:

stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammæ
laeta uomunt patriumque aperitur uertice sidus. (Aen. 8.680-81)

Standing on the high poop, twin flames from his temples
Joyous spew forth and his father's star appears on his head.

Aeneas' helmet shoots out flames (*flammasque uomentem*, 8.620 and *flamma*, 10.271) and from his shield fires leap forth (*uomit*, 10.272); imagery that is repeated in the description of the flames that spurt from Octavian's brow (*flammas ... uomunt*, 8.680-

81).⁴⁹ The association is strengthened by the repetition of *cristis* (8.620 and 10.271) and *uertice* (10.271 and 8.681). The language and imagery used here thus connects Augustus with Aeneas.

Octavian, as we know, marched triumphantly into Rome on the day following the celebration of the festival of Hercules and, indeed, Virgil has Aeneas arrive at the site of future Rome during this same commemoration (8.102f.). Moreover, on the following day – the very same day on which the triple triumph began in 29 BC – he receives the shield from Venus (8.615-25) that depicts at its centre (*in medio*, ‘in the middle’, 8.675)⁵⁰ the battle of Actium and Octavian’s triple triumph (8.675-728).⁵¹ A further connection is provided by the fact that Venus’ bestowal of the shield to Aeneas presages (retrospectively) another such presentation; in 27 BC, the senate presented a golden shield to Augustus commemorating his *uirtus* (‘virtue’), *clementia* (‘clemency’), *iustitia* (‘fairness’) and *pietas* (‘piety’).⁵² The presentation of the shield to Aeneas and the description of the Actian scenes and triple triumph adorning it suggest a strong relationship between Aeneas and the *princeps*.

The fact that Aeneas and Augustus are so strongly associated affords special significance to the associations made in the *Aeneid* between Aeneas and Hercules. Aeneas is closely associated with Augustus, both in the *Aeneid* and the Forum of Augustus, as an ancestor of the Julian *gens* and as a paradigmatic figure. That Hercules is so clearly connected with, and a model for, Aeneas in the *Aeneid* thus serves to associate him with, and render him an exemplary figure for, Augustus. If the representation of Aeneas informs that of Augustus and, similarly, Hercules that of Aeneas, then the same must be true of Hercules and Augustus. The connections traced out above are also explicated by Virgil. As we have seen, that both Aeneas and Augustus arrived at Rome at the time of the celebration of the festival of Hercules signals the tripartite connection.

⁴⁹ For a concise overview of the allusive imagery in the *Aeneid* and of the importance of *uomere* and *flamma*, see Lyne, R. O. A. M., *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, pp. 27f., Gransden, n. 620, p. 160 and n. 680-1, pp. 176-77 and Eden, n. 620f., p. 162 and n. 680f., p. 182.

⁵⁰ Gransden, n. 626-728, p. 162, notes that the description of Augustus at Actium also forms the centre of the ecphrasis.

⁵¹ For the connection between the celebration of the founding of the Ara Maxima and Augustus’ triple triumph and for the link between Hercules and Augustus in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, see Gransden, n. 102, p. 96, Eden, n. 102, p. 56 and Boyle, pp. 150-51.

⁵² RG 34. See Eden, n. 630f., pp. 163-64 and Boyle, p. 153. For Augustus’ *clipeus uirtutis*, see Zanker, pp. 95-97.

Additionally, all three are the offspring of a divine parent and all represent, on the surface at least, the triumph of good over evil – Hercules defeats the etymologically evil Cacus; a victory that foreshadows Aeneas’ defeat of Turnus and Augustus’ victory over Antony.⁵³ Close association of Hercules and Aeneas, then, reinforces the connection between Hercules and Augustus.

The *Aeneid* abounds with imagery that links Hercules and Aeneas. The choruses at the festival of Hercules sing of his hardships (*labores*):

... ut duros mille labores
rege sub Eurystheo fatis Iunonis iniquae
pertulerit. (*Aen.* 8.291-93)

... how a thousand harsh labours
Under King Eurystheus by the decrees of cruel Juno
He carried out.

The description of Juno’s treatment of Hercules recalls Venus’ earlier words to Cupid concerning Aeneas:

‘frater ut Aeneas pelago tuus omnia circum
litora iactetur odiis Iunonis iniquae.’⁵⁴ (*Aen.* 1.667-68)

‘How on the sea your brother Aeneas around every
Shore is tossed by the hatred of cruel Juno.’

Both Hercules and Aeneas suffered at the hands of Juno.⁵⁵ In fact, an association between the two is suggested right from the very beginning of the *Aeneid* when Aeneas is said to

⁵³ The clean moral dichotomy of good versus evil presented ‘on the surface’ is also subverted and confused by Virgil, as we shall see. For an overview, see Lyne, pp. 27f. and Boyle, pp.150f.

⁵⁴ Note that some manuscripts have *acerbate* and not *iniquae*; see Austin, R. G., *Aeneidos Liber Primus*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, n. 668, p. 203. This need not, however, lessen the comparison.

⁵⁵ For the persecution of both Hercules and Aeneas by Juno, see Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 132 and Gransden, n. 292, p. 120.

be suffering *saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram* ('through the inexorable anger of harsh Juno', 1.4), thus recalling the sufferings endured by Hercules in completing the labours enforced upon him by Juno.⁵⁶

The labours of Hercules (*labores*, 8.291), here, introduce another important point of association between Hercules and Aeneas.⁵⁷ Hercules was, of course, famous for the labours that he performed in order to placate Juno. Throughout the *Aeneid*, Virgil refers to the 'labours' of Aeneas also. Venus pleads with Jupiter to put an end to Aeneas' and the Trojans' sufferings (*laborum*, 1.241) and Aeneas, himself, describes the downfall of Troy and subsequent hardships (1.372f.) in the same language (*laborum*, 1.373). In the third book, Aeneas, recalling the Trojans' wanderings, determines to ask Phoebus for an end to his trials (*laborum*, 3.145), while his Penates urge him to undertake an arduous journey: *fugae ne linque laborem* ('do not shirk the labour of flight', 3.160). Later in the same book, Aeneas recalls seeking advice from Helenus and, again, he describes his troubles as *labores*:

'quidue sequens tantos possim superare labores?' (*Aen.* 3.368)

'Following what [advice] might I overcome such labours?'

Helenus, in his reply, foretells that the sight of a white sow and her young will spell the beginning of the end of Aeneas' suffering using the same term:

'is locus urbis erit, requies ea certa laborum.' (*Aen.* 3.393)

'That will be the city's site, there a sure rest from your labours.'

Later, when Helenus urges him to consult the Sibyl, who will instruct him in his course of action, he speaks again of Aeneas' *labores*:

⁵⁶ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 132.

⁵⁷ For the importance of *labor* in forging an association between Aeneas and Hercules, see Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, p. 170 and Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 132f.

‘et quo quemque modo fugiasque ferasque laborem
expediet.’ (Aen. 3.459)

‘In what way you can escape or bear each labour
She will explain.’

In the fourth book, Jupiter bemoans Aeneas’ reluctance to leave Carthage and carry out his destiny:

‘nec super ipse sua molitur laude laborem.’ (Aen. 4.233)

‘Not [even] for his own fame’s sake does he undertake the labour.’

The language is repeated when Mercury conveys the message to Aeneas:

‘nec super ipse tua moliris laude laborem.’ (Aen. 4.273)

‘Not [even] for your own fame’s sake do you undertake the labour.’

In the sixth book, the Sybil, instructing Aeneas in his descent to the Underworld, announces to him *hoc opus, hic labor est* (‘this is the task, this is the labour’, 6.129), recalling Hercules’ own Underworld labour. The proliferation of references to Aeneas’ *labores* is one of the strongest reminders that we are to recognise the firm association between Aeneas and Hercules.⁵⁸

Aeneas, himself, compares directly his own journey to the Underworld with that of Hercules.⁵⁹ In reply to the Sibyl, Aeneas states that he is up to the task (*laborum*, 6.103) of the journey and that his divine ancestry should be evidence enough of his ability to succeed:

⁵⁸ Further references to Aeneas’ *labores* are found at Aen. 2.708, 6.103, 6.135, 6.892, 8.380, for example.

⁵⁹ For Aeneas’ excursion to the Underworld and its link with the journey of Hercules, see Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 134-35.

‘quid memorem Alciden? et mi genus ab Ioue summo.’ (Aen. 6.123)

‘Why should I mention Alcides? My descent is from highest Jove.’

Here, then, is a direct comparison with Hercules made by Aeneas himself.

Another example of recurring imagery in the *Aeneid* that links the two heroes is that provided by Virgil’s use of the lion’s skin motif. Together with his *claua* (‘club’), Hercules’ most famous prop is the pelt of the Nemean lion, a victory spoil gained through one of his many labours. Virgil’s association of Aeneas with this allegory suggests a connection with Hercules.⁶⁰ As Evander welcomes Aeneas to the celebratory rites of Hercules, he seats him in the place of honour upon a lion skin:

praecipuumque toro et uillosi pelle leonis
accipit Aenean solioque inuitat acerno. (Aen. 8.177-78).

And foremost to a cushion and a shaggy lion’s skin
He welcomes Aeneas and he entertains him on a maple throne.

The fact that the lion-skin is offered to Aeneas at a celebration of Hercules confirms and emphasises its symbolic nature.⁶¹ When Evander supplies horses to the Trojans, a specially chosen mount is offered to Aeneas, furnished with a lion’s pelt:

ducunt exortem Aeneae, quem fulua leonis
pellis obit totum, praefulgens unguibus aureis. (Aen. 8.552-53)

They lead forth a select [horse] for Aeneas, which a lion’s tawny
Skin completely surrounds, resplendent with its golden claws.

⁶⁰ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 134, 142 and 144.

⁶¹ Eden, n. 177f., p. 71 and Gransden, n. 177, pp. 103-04.

Again, the description recalls Hercules' customary attire.⁶² Retelling of his escape from Troy, Aeneas insists upon carrying his father:

'ipse subibo umeris, nec labor iste grauabit.' (Aen. 2.708)

'I will bear you on my shoulders; such a task will be no burden.'

The language, here, evokes Hercules' shouldering of the sky during his quest for the apples of Hesperides and the reference to Hercules is strengthened when Aeneas prepares for the load by spreading the pelt of a lion across shoulders:⁶³

'haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla
ueste super fuluique insternor pelle leonis.' (Aen. 2.721-22)

'Having spoken thus, my broad shoulders and bowed neck
I covered by spreading over a tawny lion's skin.'

The persistent imagery of the lion-skin confirms the association between the two heroes.

Indeed, when Evander invites Aeneas to enter into his home following their tour of future Rome, he informs him that he is emulating the actions of Hercules:

ut uentum ad sedes, 'haec', inquit, 'limina uictor
Alcides subiit, haec illum regia cepit.' (Aen. 8.362-33)

When they reached the home, he said, 'These lintels victorious
Alcides passed beneath; this royal house accommodated him.'

⁶² Gransden, n. 552-3, p. 154. For the gilding of the claws, see Eden, n. 553, p. 153. The claws of the lion's pelt often appear in representations of Hercules' attire – see, for example, Herakles Farnese, by Glycon of Athens (original attributed to Lysippos) and Hydria in Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, no. 2428, in illustrations 1 and 9 in Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, plates 1 and 6 (between pp. 128 and 129).

⁶³ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 133, claims that the expression *molitur laborem* ('he undertakes the labour') at Aen. 4.233 also recalls Hercules' shouldering of the sky.

The specific equation of the two heroes entering into the house signals their close association.⁶⁴

Virgil's description of the respective foes of the two heroes further suggests a link between Aeneas and Hercules. During the celebratory rites of Hercules, the choruses sing his praises (8.287f.) and recall his slaying, together with the Cretan bull and Nemean lion, of the centaurs, Hylaeus and Pholus:

‘tu nubigenas, inuicte, bimembris,
Hylaeumque Pholumque, manu, tu Cresia mactas
prodigia et uastum Nemea sub rupe leonem.’ (Aen. 8.293-95)

‘You, unconquered one, the cloud-born twin-forms,⁶⁵
Hylaeus and Pholus, with your own hand, you slay, and the Cretan
Monsters and the huge lion beneath the Nemean crag.’

Compare the above description with that of two of Aeneas' foes as they depart for battle from Tibur:

Catillusque acerque Coras, Argiua iuuentus
et primam ante aciem densa inter tela feruntur:
ceu duo nubigenae cum uertice montis ab alto
descendunt Centauri ... (Aen. 7.672-75)

Catillus and fierce Coras, Argive youths,
Lead out before the front line amid dense spears:
As when from a mountain's high peak two cloud-born
Centaurs descend ...

⁶⁴ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, pp. 143-44.

⁶⁵ *Bimembris* refers to a Centaur's twin-form – part-human, part-beast.

The association between the foes of Hercules and Aeneas is not merely denoted by Virgil's comparison of the Latin leaders Catillus and Coras to Centaurs, but by the extraordinarily striking adjective *nubigena* (8.293 and 7.674).⁶⁶ That *nubigena* appears only on these two occasions in the *Aeneid* and appears to be a word coined by Virgil confirms the connection between the two heroes.⁶⁷

Virgil's intention in creating such a strong interconnection between Hercules and Augustus in the *Aeneid*, whether it is made directly or, indirectly, through Aeneas, is to encourage the reader to see something of each in the other – when Hercules behaves in a certain way, we are to reflect upon Augustus' own actions. Hercules' defeat of Cacus anticipates and parallels Augustus' victory over Antony, just as it does Aeneas' battle with Turnus.

While the association is almost entirely poetic – that is, it is made by the verse writers – it is not exclusively so. Livy, too, hints at the connection between Hercules and Augustus in his first book.⁶⁸ Following his defeat of Cacus, Hercules is described by Livy as 'more august' than a mortal:

... habitum formamque uiri aliquantum ampliorem
augustiolemque humana ... (Livy 1.7.9)

... the bearing and form of the man was somewhat ampler
and more august than human ...

By applying the comparative form of *augustus* to Hercules, Livy draws attention to the connection between the *princeps* and the hero.⁶⁹ The fact that Livy uses the same adjective to refer to Romulus in the very next chapter (... *se augustiolem ... fecit*, 'he [Romulus] fashioned himself more august', 1.8.2) – a figure with whom Augustus had,

⁶⁶ For the unusual adjective *nubigena*, see Gransden, n. 293-5, p. 121, Eden, n. 293, p. 101 and Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 143.

⁶⁷ Eden, n. 293, p. 101.

⁶⁸ For the dating of Livy's first book, see Luce, T. J., 'The Dating of Livy's First Decade.' *TAPA* 96, 1965, pp. 209-11. The book was most likely composed between 27 and 25 BC.

⁶⁹ As noted by Ogilvie, R. M., *A Commentary on Livy Books 1-5*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965, n. 7.9, p. 60.

and promoted, a strong attachment – strengthens the allusion.⁷⁰ Indeed, Ovid, also suggesting a connection between Hercules and Augustus, uses the same adjective to describe Hercules' superhuman *grauitas* ('dignity') in the *Metamorphoses*:⁷¹

sic ubi mortales Tirynthius exuit artus
 parte sui meliore uiget, maiorque uideri
 coepit et augusta fieri grauitate uerendus. (Met. 9.268-70)

Thus when the Tirynthian took off his mortal frame
 He was enlivened in his better part, he began to seem
 Greater and to become awesome in his august dignity.

Although, then, there is no statuary or other such concrete evidence attesting to the import of Hercules as an Augustan symbol, and no confirmation of any attempt on Augustus' behalf to promote such an association, Hercules, nonetheless, emerges as an important mythological figure in the Augustan period who is closely associated with the *princeps*. Augustan literature makes much of this connection and, indeed, every one of major Augustan poets – Horace, Virgil and Ovid, as we have seen, and Propertius as we will see – promoted the association. Hercules' status as an exemplary figure for Augustus was well established in the Augustan age. That the association outlived Augustus, himself, is testimony to the strength and durability of the connection.

⁷⁰ Ogilvie, n. 7.9, p. 60, remarks that by 'using *augustus* of Hercules and Romulus twice in such close proximity, Livy may be intending to call Augustus to mind.' Livy also states that Hercules will be added (*aucturum*, 1.7.10) to the number of the gods and that twelve birds provided Romulus with an augury (*augurio*, 1.8.3) of his kingship. *Augeo* and *augurium* are both included in Ovid's etymological analysis of the title 'Augustus' – see *Fasti* 1.607-616.

⁷¹ The allusion to Augustus is recognised by Hill, D. E., *Ovid. Metamorphoses IX-XII*. Aris and Phillips, Warminster, 1999, n. 270, p. 147.

CHAPTER TWO:

***Aeneid* 8 and Propertius 4.9**

A survey of Augustan literature shows that Hercules was an important and enduring Augustan symbol who was closely associated with the *princeps*. The most important and influential equation of Hercules and Augustus is found in the *Aeneid*; particularly in the eighth book. That a firm thematic and symbolic relationship exists between *Aeneid* 8 and Propertius 4.9, that the respective portrayals of Hercules share a number of characteristics and that Hercules, here in 4.9, functions as an exemplar for Augustus, just as he did in the *Aeneid*, is evidenced by Propertius' allusion to Virgil's work and by the reaffirmation of the association between Hercules and the *princeps*. Furthermore, he announces the importance of a knowledge of *Aeneid* 8 as an interpretive tool for deciphering the complexities of 4.9 by signalling the relationship between the two accounts of Hercules' arrival at the site of future Rome. This chapter focuses upon the relationship between the two accounts.

The subject matter alone is, of course, evidence enough to suggest a correlation between both Virgil's and Propertius' tales of Hercules' arrival at the site of proto-Rome.¹ In both versions, Hercules arrives at future Rome having recovered the cattle of Geryon and having defeated the triple headed monster:

... nam maximus ultor,
tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus,
Alcides aderat taurosque hac uictor agebat
ingentis, uallemque boues amnemque tenebant. (*Aen.* 8.201-04)

¹ For similarities (and contrasts) between the two versions, see Warden, J., 'Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4.9.70f.' *Hermes* 110, 1982, pp. 228f. The particular similarities and divergences are detailed also in the commentaries of, for example, Paley, F. A., *Propertii Carmina*. Bell and Daldy, London, 1872, pp. 269f., Postgate, J. P., *Select Elegies of Propertius*. London, 1884, pp. 224f. (note that both Paley and Postgate consider this elegy to be the ninth in a fifth book), Butler, H. E. and Barber, E. A., *The Elegies of Propertius*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1933, pp. 370f., Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book IV*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, pp. 135f. and Richardson, L. Jr., *Propertius. Elegies I-IV*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977, pp. 471f.

... For the greatest avenger
 Exultant in the death and spoils of triple Geryon,
 Alcides, came, and victorious, led hither his bulls
 Of great size, and his cattle occupied the river-valley.

Compare Virgil's account to that offered by Propertius:

Amphitryoniades qua tempestate iuunecos
 egerat a stabulis, o Erythea, tuis,
 uenit ad inuictos pecorosa Palatia montis,
 et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues,
 qua Velabra suo stagnabant flumine quoque
 nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas. (4.9.1-6)

What time the steers Amphitryoniades
 Had driven from your fold, O Erythea,
 He came to the sheepy Palatine, unconquered hill,
 And he settled his weary cattle, himself also weary,
 Where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow and where
 The sailor used to glide through urban waters.

In both *Aeneid* 8 and Propertius 4.9, the paronymously named Cacus steals a few cattle from Hercules' herd and drags them backwards by the tail – thinking that this would foil attempts to discover their whereabouts – into his cave:

quattuor a stabulis praestanti corpore tauros
 auertit, totidem forma superante iuuencas.
 atque hos, ne qua forent pedibus uestigia rectis,
 cauda in speluncam tractos ... (Aen. 8.207-10)

Four bulls, with outstanding form, from their fold
 [Cacus] stole, and as many cows with peerless beauty.
 And these, lest there be tracks from feet pointing forward,
 He dragged by the tail into the cave.

Propertius offers a very similar account:

hic, ne certa forent manifestae signa rapinae,
 auersos cauda traxit in antra boues. (4.9.11-12)

[Cacus], lest there be sure signs of flagrant theft,
 Dragged the cows backward by the tail into the cave.

On each occasion, Hercules is alerted to the stolen cattle's hidden location by their lowing. In Virgil's account, it is a single cow:

reddidit una boum uocem uastoque sub antro
 mugit et Caci spem custodita fefellit. (Aen. 8.217-18)

One cow returned the call and from the vast cave
 Lowed and, although imprisoned, cheated the hopes of Cacus.

In Propertius' version of the tale, the cattle cry out in unison (*furem sonuere iuuenci*, 'the cattle cried "Thief!"', 'the cattle betrayed the thief', 4.9.13). In both accounts, too, the sequence of events is replicated – Cacus is killed, the cattle are rescued and the Ara Maxima founded. Virgil has Hercules strangle Cacus to death:

hic Cacus in tenebris incendia uana uomentem
 corripit in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens
 elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur. (Aen. 8.259-61)

Here, Cacus spewing into the darkness vain fires, he
 Grabs in a knot-like grip and, holding firm, strangles
 Until his eyes burst and his throat drains of blood.

Propertius has Hercules strike him down with his club (*Maenalio iacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo* / *Cacus*, ‘Cacus lies dead, his tri-brows smote by the Maenalian branch’, 4.9.15-16). In the *Aeneid*, the cattle are rescued when the doors of Cacus’ lair are ripped off:

panditur extemplo foribus domus atra reuolsis
 abstractaeque boues abiurataeque rapinae
 caelo ostenduntur ... (Aen. 8.262-64)

At once, with the doors torn off, the black home is exposed
 And the stolen cattle and the plunder denied
 Are revealed to heaven ...

In 4.9, they are similarly rescued (*ite boues, Herculis ite boues*, ‘go cattle, go cattle of Hercules’, 4.9.16-17) when Cacus’ doors are demolished (*furis et implacidas diruit ira fores*, ‘[Hercules] anger smashed down the thief’s hostile doors’, 4.9.14). On both occasions, the rescue of the cattle is marked by the foundation of an altar – the Ara Maxima:

hanc aram luco statuit, quae Maxima semper
 dicetur nobis et erit quae maxima semper. (Aen. 8.271-72)

In the grove he set this altar; ‘Greatest’ always
 Will it be called by us and greatest will it always be.

‘Maxima quae gregibus deuota est Ara repertis,
 ara per has’ inquit ‘maxima facta manus ...’ (4.9.67-68)

‘The Ara Maxima, which was vowed for my flock recovered,
Was’, he said, ‘made the greatest altar through these hands.’

The fact that *maxima* is repeated on each line in both Propertius and Virgil, here, strengthens the allusion.²

A closer relationship, however, is signalled between the two works than is suggested by subject matter alone; there are a number of specific points of contact between the Hercules/Cacus episode in the *Aeneid* and Propertius’ version, and between the respective portrayals of Hercules.

Virgil’s Hercules, struck by fatigue (*fessus*, ‘weary’, *Aen.* 8.232) during his battle with Cacus, rests in the valley (*ter fessus ualle resedit*, ‘three times he fell back to the valley, weary’, *Aen.* 8.232) where the river Tiber runs.³ Propertius’ Hercules, similarly tired (*fessus*, 4.9.4) upon his arrival at proto-Rome – and, again, following his encounter with Cacus (*fessus*, 4.9.66) – seeks respite in the same location, alongside the Tiber:

et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues,
qua Velabra stagnabant flumine quoque
nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas. (4.9.4-6)

And he settled his weary cattle, weary himself,
Where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow and where
The sailor used to glide through urban waters.

Propertius’ choice of language, here, reinforces association between his version of the tale and the Virgilian account – even the poor cattle are *fessi* (4.9.4).

Further allusion is found in Hercules’ boasting to the worshippers in the grove of the Bona Dea (4.9.37-41). Hercules, having been refused entry to the grove, asks if they know who they are dealing with. Surely they have heard of his shouldering of the world,

² As noted by Eden, P. T., *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*. Brill, Leiden, 1975, n. 271-2, p. 118.

³ That the river runs through the valley is clear from the earlier description: *uallemque boues amnemque tenebant*, ‘his cows held the river-valley’, *Aen.* 8.204.

he inquires, referring to the occasion when he relieved Atlas of the burden of supporting the globe, allowing Atlas to gather the apples of Hesperides for him – the subject of his eleventh labour:

‘audistisne aliquem, tergo qui sustulit orbem?’ (4.9.37)

‘You have heard of one who bore the globe on his back?’

Compare this phrase with Aeneas’ description of Atlas’ support of the world, found in the *Aeneid*:

... aetherios umero qui sustinet orbis. (Aen. 8.137)

... he who sustains the heavenly globe on his shoulder.

The connection between Propertius 4.9 and *Aeneid* 8 is, again, linguistically reinforced with *sustulit orbem* verbally echoing *sustinet orbis*.⁴

Additional reinforcement is evidenced by Propertius’ choice of first word in 4.9 – *Amphitryoniades* (‘son of Amphitryon’, 4.9.1). There are only three prior uses of this patronymic and two – the two that immediately precede 4.9 – are found in *Aeneid* 8 (103 and 214) in connection with Hercules’ battle with Cacus – the same subject that begins 4.9.⁵ *Amphitryoniades* – such an extraordinary word – clearly signposts the relationship that this elegy shares with Virgil’s version of the tale and the relationship between the Hercules of *Aeneid* 8 and the one found in 4.9 – the linguistic similarity invites the reader to compare the portrayal of Hercules and the events of this elegy with the Hercules/Cacus episode in the *Aeneid*.⁶ The epically flavoured patronymic, the striking four word

⁴ The linguistic similarity, here, is noted by Warden, ‘Epic into Elegy’, p. 237.

⁵ The other occurrence – the earliest recorded – is found at Catullus 68B.112. This is discussed in the following chapter.

⁶ This is the primary function of *Amphitryoniades*, according to Effe, B., ‘*Hercules Fervidus Ira*: Ein Motiv der “Aeneis” und seine Rezeption bei Properz und Ovid.’ *Hermes* 130, 2, 2002, p. 170. The point is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

hexameter and the epic tone of the first six lines of this elegy all serve to reinforce an association with Virgil's epic and the epically heroic Hercules.⁷

The opening word of 4.9 might also remind the reader of a work of another Augustan poet that also has 'Hercules' as its very first word:

Herculis ritu modo dictus, o plebs,
morte uenalem petiisse laurum,
Caesar Hispana repetit Penatis
uictor ab ora. (Odes 3.14.1-4)

Said just now in the manner of Hercules, O plebs,
To have sought the laurel won by death,
Caesar returns to his Penates from the Spanish
Shore victorious.

That 4.9 begins with the name of 'Hercules' (*Amphitryoniades*, 4.9.1) might, for the reader, recall the first word of Horace's *Odes* 3.14. The association is strengthened by the fact that, on each occasion, it is Hercules' arrival in Italy after the defeat of Geryon and the capture of his cattle that is described. In Propertius' version, Hercules is said to have driven the cattle from Erythea – the legendary Spanish home of Geryon – to Rome (4.9.1-6). Horace alludes to the same event when he notes the similarly successful Spanish campaigns of both Hercules and Augustus with the phrase 'a victor from Spanish shores' (*Odes* 3.14.3-4). By alluding to this *Ode*, where there is specific comparison between the deeds of Hercules and Augustus, Propertius invites the reader similarly to compare their actions in 4.9.

Another example of the association between Hercules and Augustus, and between *Aeneid* 8 and 4.9, is found in the respective accounts of the defeat of Cacus. Propertius' Cacus is a monster with three mouths:

⁷ See Debrohun, J. B., *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003, p. 120 and Lindheim, S. H., 'Hercules Cross-Dressed, Hercules Undressed: Unmasking the Construction of the Propertian Amator in Elegy 4.9.' *AJP* 119, 1998, p. 54.

incola Cacus erat, metuendo raptor ab antro,
per tria partitos qui dabat ora sonos. (4.9.9-10)

Cacus was the resident, a robber from a fearful cave,
Who uttered sounds shared between three mouths.

Indeed, when we are told of the circumstances of Cacus' death, we discover that he has three heads:

Maenalia iacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo. (4.9.15)

He lies dead, his tri-brows smote by the Maenalian branch.

What is so striking, here, is the emphasis placed upon Cacus' triple-headed appearance. The description of Cacus as a three-mouthed, triple-headed monster is unique to Propertius – no other writer depicts him as such – has caused some confusion and prompted diverse interpretations. Some claim that Propertius has confused Cacus with Geryon, or that he wished to include a suggestion of Geryon in Cacus' description.⁸ Some think that the conflation of Cacus and Geryon exaggerates or emphasises Cacus' monstrous nature.⁹ It has even been claimed that Propertius invites comparison between his three-headed Cacus and Theocritus' Polyphemus on the grounds that Polyphemus' Cyclopean eye is indirectly present in 4.9, and that Cacus' three heads 'function as the warped or dislocated gaze that characterises the alterity of the poem's pre-Roman world where water and wood-land co-exist with urban space.'¹⁰ It is also suggested that Cacus'

⁸ See, for example, Fox, M., *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 172, Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 10, p. 472 and Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', p. 232. Grant, M., *Roman Myths*. Charles Scribner's Sons (Pub.), New York, 1971, pp. 53f., has a brief discussion of this supposed conflation.

⁹ Such are the claims of Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus: Propertius, IV, 9.' *AJP* 85, 1964, p. 4 and Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', p. 232.

¹⁰ Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in *Elegy* 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, p. 267 – for Polyphemus, see Theocritus 6.6, 6.19, 7.152, 11.8 and 11.80.

three mouths ‘playfully deflate Virgil’s hundred Sibylline mouths (*Aen.* 6.42-44).’¹¹ Comparisons with Polyphemus and the Sibylline mouths might not strike the reader as immediately apparent, but the description of Cacus’ three heads does indeed evoke triple-headed Geryon, thus emphasising and enhancing Cacus’ monstrousness.

Cacus’ three heads, however, have a further symbolic function. Hercules’ triple triumph over the three-headed Cacus in 4.9 picks up on Virgil’s description of Hercules’ triumphant entry to Rome in the *Aeneid* (8.201f.). There, forecasting Octavian’s own triple-triumph, Hercules enters Rome as a *uictor* (‘victor’, 8.203) and *maximus ultor* (‘greatest avenger’, 8.201), having defeated triple-headed Geryon. In *Aeneid* 8, the conquering of each of Geryon’s heads prefigures Octavian’s triply victorious eastern campaign and ensuing triple triumph.¹² These same events are alluded to by Propertius’ endowment of Cacus with three heads. The repeated stressing of Cacus’ triple-headed form (4.9.10 and 15) drives home the point.

Hercules’ defeat of Cacus’ three heads in 4.9, then, confirms for the reader an association between Propertius’ Hercules and Augustus by equating Hercules’ defeat of the triple-headed Cacus with Octavian’s eastern victories and triple-triumph.¹³ In the *Aeneid*, a link between Hercules and Augustus is forged, as we have seen, by recurring imagery, by their respective triumphant entries into Rome, by the date of Aeneas’ arrival in Rome and by the juxtaposition of the celebration of Hercules’ founding of the Ara Maxima and Octavian’s triple triumph, indicated by the emphasis upon the Potitii as custodians of the rites of Hercules. Here, in 4.9, the connection is suggested by Hercules’ own triple-triumph – with each head representing one of the three victories celebrated by

¹¹ Spencer, p. 268. Virgil says at *Aen.* 6.42-44:

excisum Euboiacae latus ingens rupis in antrum,
quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum,
unde runt totidem uoces, responsa Sibyllae.

The huge side of the Euboean cliff is excavated into a cave,
Into which a hundred wide passages lead, a hundred mouths,
Whence rush as many voices, the answers of the Sibyl.

¹² For triple-headed Geryon as a symbolic reference to Octavian’s triple-triumph, see Gransden, K. W., *Virgil Aeneid Book VIII*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, n. 201-3, p. 110.

¹³ Spencer, p. 268, mentions almost as an aside that Cacus’ three heads might remind the reader that Augustus juxtaposed his triple-triumph with the celebration of Hercules’ founding of the Ara Maxima. This seems a more plausible explanation of Cacus’ three-heads than any supposed suggestion of Polyphemus or the ‘Sibylline mouths’.

Octavian. Indeed, the fact that *tria tempora* (4.9.15) can be translated in a temporal sense (notwithstanding the context) to mean ‘three times’ or ‘three days’, also suggests a connection with Octavian’s triple triumph that was, of course, held over a three day period.¹⁴ An association between the actions of Hercules within this elegy and those of Augustus invites a reading of Hercules as a paradigm for Augustus here too, given that he performs such a role in the *Aeneid*.

An association between the respective portrayals of Hercules is suggested by allusion and linguistic and thematic similarity. The thematic relationship that exists between the two works is, perhaps, the most important signal that we are to see Hercules as a paradigm for Augustus in 4.9 also. Not only are there what we might call positive associations – for example, each hero is portrayed as an *alexikakos* (‘avenger/averted of evil’)¹⁵ – but there are many subversive or negative associations that link the respective works and heroes – there is a ‘darker side’ to the *Aeneid* and the same is true of 4.9.¹⁶

The *Aeneid* offers a complex series of allusions, symbolism and imagery linking not only Augustus with Aeneas and Hercules, as we have seen, but also each of the heroes with their respective opponents and, by implication, with the opponents of their exemplary counterparts. Hercules and thus Aeneas and Augustus share similarities with Cacus, Turnus and Antony. The clean moral dichotomy, first presented in the etymologically defined opposition of Hercules (ἀλεξίκακος, ‘avenger/averted of evil’) and Cacus (κακός, ‘evil’) – the struggle of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ – that, on the surface, characterises the respective protagonists and their opponents in the *Aeneid*, is confused and subverted by Virgil.¹⁷

An example of Virgil’s confusion of the moral differences that at first seem to distinguish those on the side of ‘good’ and those on the side of ‘evil’ is apparent from an

¹⁴ Spencer, p. 268, notes the connection.

¹⁵ For *Alexikakos* as an epithet of Hercules, see Galinsky, K., *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey, 1972, pp. 4 and 127 and March, J., *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Cassell, London, 1998, p. 192.

¹⁶ This term is used of the *Aeneid* by Janan, M. W., *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, pp. 129-30 and n.9, p. 206.

¹⁷ The binarily defined opposition of Hercules and Cacus is further reinforced in the *Aeneid* by the presence of Evander (εὖ άνήρ, ‘good man’) whom Hercules sides with. ‘Good Man’ and the ‘Avenger of Evil’ defeat ‘Evil Man’. For an overview of the polar oppositions in the *Aeneid*, see Morgan, L., ‘Assimilation and Civil War: Hercules and Cacus.’ in H.-P. Stahl (Ed.), *Virgil’s Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*. Duckworth, London, 1998, p. 176.

assessment of the *furor* ('fury', 'frenzy', 'rage') of the respective characters in the *Aeneid*. Hercules is furious at the theft of his cattle by Cacus:

hic uero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro
felle dolor. (Aen. 8.219-20)

Here indeed did the anger of Alcides blaze with fury
In black gall.

Again, he is said to be furious as he searches for an entrance to Cacus' lair:

ecce furens animis aderat Tirynthius omnemque
accessum lustrans ... (Aen. 8.228-29)

Behold, furious with anger the Tirynthian came and every
Access he sought ...

Hercules' fury (*furor*) during his battle with Cacus portends Aeneas' fury immediately before his slaying of Turnus:

ille, oculis postquam saeui monumenta doloris
exuuiasque hausit, furiis accensus et ira
terribilis ... (Aen. 12.945-47)

He, when with his eyes, those reminders of his cruel anguish,
The trophies, he drank in, with fury he burned and in his anger
He was terrible ...

Furthermore, it recalls Aeneas' earlier distress at the sacking of Troy:

... 'furor iraque mentem

praecipitat, pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis.’ (*Aen.* 2.316-17)

... ‘Fury and anger my reason
Destroy, and the glory of dying in arms rushes upon me.’

An association between those on the side of ‘good’ – the models for Augustus – is thus evidenced by the similarity of their *furor*.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, Cacus also displays similar fury.¹⁸ Consider Virgil’s description of Cacus as he leads away the cattle from Hercules’ herd:

at furiis Caci mens effera, ne quid inausum
aut intractum scelerisue doliue fuisset,
quattor a stabulis praestanti corpore tauros
auertit, totidem forma superant iuuenas. (*Aen.* 8.205-08)¹⁹

But Cacus’ mind, wild with fury, lest anything undared
Or untried of villainy or treachery remained,
Four bulls, outstanding in stature, from the stalls
Drove, and as many cows of pre-eminent beauty.

Cacus too, then, is characterised by *furor* and, indeed, the association between the *furor* of Cacus and Hercules is reinforced by the proximity of the respective descriptions. Hercules is driven by *furor* (*furiis*, 8.219) a mere fourteen lines after Cacus is described in the same terms (*furiis*, 8.205); then again, only nine lines later, Hercules is described as *furens* (8.228). Thus in the space of twenty three lines we find three descriptions of

¹⁸ For the application of *furor* to both Cacus and Hercules, see Boyle, A. J., ‘*Aeneid* 8. Images of Rome.’ in *Reading Vergil’s Aeneid. An Interpretive Guide*. C. Perkell (Ed.), University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1999, p. 155.

¹⁹ Note that most of the MSS have *furiis*, while others have *furis*. *Furis* is objected to by some on the grounds that it is not an epic word and that it is found nowhere else in the *Aeneid*. It must be noted, however, that Servius read *furis* (*ad Aen.* 8.205). Propertius uses *furem* and *furis* in 4.9.13 and 14, respectively, in what seems to be a deliberate allusion to the characteristic *furor* of the protagonists in *Aeneid* 8. The linguistic and etymological similarities between *fur*, *furia* and *furor*, however, enable such an allusion regardless of the reading of *furis* or *furiis* at *Aeneid* 8.205. For a detailed yet concise discussion of the difficulties presented by the MSS readings of 8.205, see Eden, n. 205, pp. 79-80.

fury applied to Hercules and Cacus. That Hercules and Cacus (together with Aeneas) share this characteristic serves to obfuscate the clean binary opposition that seems to define, on the surface, the heroes and their foes.

Further confusion between hero and foe, between conqueror and conquered, and between those on the side of 'good' and those on the side of 'evil', arises from Virgil's use of flame imagery. Consider the description of the helmet that Venus presents to a marvelling Aeneas:

miraturque interque manus et bracchia uersat
terribilem cristis galeam flammasque uomentem. (Aen. 8.619-20)

He admires and turns between his hands and arms
The helmet, terrible with its crests and spewing flames.

Aeneas' extraordinary helmet shoots forth (*uomere*, 8.620) flames.²⁰ It does so on another occasion also, only this time it is accompanied by his shield:

ardet apex capiti cristisque a uertice flamma
funditur et uastos umbo uomit aureus ignis. (Aen. 10.271-72)

The helmet on his head blazes and from the plumes on top a flame
Pours forth and his golden shield spews vast fires.

While his helmet once more pours forth flames, it is his shield that spouts (*uomere*, 10.272) fire. Compare these descriptions of Aeneas' flame throwing weaponry with the description of Augustus at the battle of Actium as he appears on Aeneas' shield:

hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar
cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis,

²⁰ On the connections forged by the use of *uomere* and flame imagery in the *Aeneid*, see, for example, Boyle, pp. 155-57 and Morgan, pp. 178-79.

stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammās
laeta uomunt patriumque aperitur uertice sidus. (Aen. 8.678-81)

Here Augustus Caesar driving Italians into battle
With the senate and people, penates and great gods,
Standing on the high poop, twin flames from his temples
Joyous spew forth and his father's star appears on his head.

On this occasion, it is Augustus' brows that shoot out (*uomere*, 8.681) flames. The repetition of *uomere* and the motif of shooting flames reinforce the association between Augustus and Aeneas – both of whom defeat their foes.²¹

Yet such imagery is also associated with the defeated. Take Virgil's description of Cacus as we first encounter him:

huic monstro Volcanus erat pater: illius atros
ore uomens ignis magna se mole ferebat. (Aen. 8.198-99)

This monster's father was Vulcan: his black
Fires spewing from his mouth, he moved with great bulk.

Cacus, too, spews (*uomere*, 8.199) flames. Similar imagery is projected onto Cacus during the final throes of his battle with Hercules:

ille autem, neque enim fuga iam super ulla pericli,
faucibus ingentem fumum, mirabile dictu,
euomit inuoluitque domum caligine caeca. (Aen. 8.251-53).

But he, for now no other escape from danger remains,
From his throat a great plume of smoke, wonderful to tell,

²¹ For the link between Augustus and Aeneas forged by *uomere* and *flamma*, see Gransden, n. 680-1, pp. 176-77.

He spews and blankets the dwelling in blinding gloom.

Here we find him spewing forth (*euomere*, 8.253) great clouds of smoke; an image which is repeated just a few lines later, immediately prior to his death at the hands of Hercules:

hic Cacus in tenebris incendia uana uomentem
corripit in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens
elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur. (Aen. 8.259-61)

Here, Cacus spewing into the darkness vain fires,
He grabs in a knot-like grip and, holding firm, strangles
Until his eyes burst and his throat drains of blood.

On this last occasion, Cacus once more spews (*uomere*, 8.259) fire.

In the eighth book of the *Aeneid* alone there are five instances of this kind of flame imagery – the vomiting of fire or smoke. On three occasions the image is associated with Cacus; the other two occurrences are connected with Aeneas (whose helmet also emits flames in *Aeneid* 10) and Augustus. Not only, then, on this occasion, do imagery and language forge a connection between the respective heroes in the *Aeneid*, they also connect the heroes with their foes.

Another such connection is evident in Virgil's descriptions of the various victory spoils won in battle. Here is the account of a victorious Hercules as he triumphantly enters proto-Rome:

... nam maximus ultor,
tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus,
Alcides aderat taurosque hac uictor agebat
ingentis, uallemque boues amnemque tenebant. (Aen. 8.201-04)

... For the greatest avenger
Exultant in the death and spoils of triple Geryon,
Alcides, came, and victorious, led hither his huge

Bulls, and his cattle occupied the river-valley.

Hercules is proud (*superbus*, 8.202) of his conquest and spoils. Compare this description with that of Augustus as he celebrates his own triumphal return to Rome:

ipse, sedens niueo candentis limine Phoebi,
dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis
postibus. (Aen. 8.720-722)

Himself, seated on the snowy threshold of dazzling Phoebus,
Reviews the gifts of peoples and fixes them on the proud
Posts.

Augustus, here, hangs his spoils upon proud (*superbis*, 8.722) posts. The situational similarity – each enters Rome triumphantly following a great victory – is linguistically reinforced by the repetition of *superbus*. Hero is associated with hero.

Yet Hercules and Augustus are adjectivally linked with Cacus in the same way. Consider Evander's description of the monstrous Cacus' lair:

hic spelunca fuit uasto summota recessu,
semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat,
solis inaccessam radiis; semperque recenti
caede tepebat humus, foribusque adfixa superbis
ora uirum tristi pendebant pallida tabo. (Aen. 8.195-97)

Here was a cave driven down into a vast recess,
Which the dread figure of half-human Cacus occupied,
Inaccessible to the sun's rays; and always with fresh
Slaughter was the ground warm, and affixed to the proud doors
The faces of men hung pale in miserable gore.

Cacus, too, hangs his spoils upon proud (*superbus*, 8.196) doors. Again, the clean opposition between hero and foe is undermined by the symbolism that links rather than differentiates them.²²

The erosion and confusion of clean boundaries is a central theme of the *Aeneid* and is nowhere more evident than in the eighth book. Propertius, in 4.9, picks up on Virgil's process of subversion and presents a work with striking thematic similarities to the *Aeneid*. That this is the case is signified by the linguistic and thematic allusion between the two works, but particularly by the similarities between the Hercules/Cacus episodes in each work.

Many linguistic pointers highlight the thematic similarity shared by 4.9 and *Aeneid* 8. The confusion of the moral differences between conqueror and conquered that Virgil creates by application of *fur*, *furor* and *furia* is taken up by Propertius. Here is his description of (Cacus' theft and) Hercules' rescue of the cattle:

hic, ne certa forent manifestae signa rapinae,
 auersos cauda traxit in antra boues,
 nec sine teste deo: furem sonuere iuuenci,
 furis et implacidas diruit ira fores. (4.9.11-14)

He, lest there be sure signs of the flagrant theft,
 Backwards by the tail he dragged the cows into the cave,
 Not without a god as witness: the cattle cried 'Thief!'
 And anger smashed down the thief's hostile doors.

The anger (*ira*, 4.9.14) of Hercules, here, recalls his anger (*ira*) at *Aeneid* 8.230, but more importantly his use of *fur* (4.9.13 and 14) evokes Virgil's use of *fur*, *furor* and *furia* and creates similar confusion with regard to the status of hero and foe. The allusion to Virgil's usage alerts the reader to the possibility that similar themes – namely that of confusion of clean moral boundaries – are at work here also.

²² For the association created by *superbus* see Boyle, p. 158 and Morgan, pp. 177-78.

Indeed, the last couplet quoted above demonstrates just such a theme. Here confusion arises as to the moral superiority of Hercules and Cacus. Who is the thief? Hercules, we know, stole his cattle from Geryon; cattle which now, in turn, have been stolen by Cacus. Who, then, is the *fur* in this couplet? On first reading, the *fur* would seem to be Cacus. This reading goes something like this: ‘The cattle cried out “We have been stolen!”, and an angry Hercules smashed down the doors of the thieving Cacus.’ Yet *fur* could also refer to Hercules: ‘The cattle cried out “Thief who stole us from Geryon, help!”, and the anger of thieving Hercules smashed down Cacus’ doors.’ The alternative readings confuse the status of Hercules and Cacus. One of the key methods, then, by which Virgil undermines and confuses the perceived moral difference of the main combatants in the *Aeneid* – the application of *furor* – is alluded to by Propertius in a couplet that itself replicates the confusion.

The fact that Propertius calls Cacus a *raptor* (‘robber’, 4.9.9), echoing Virgil’s naming of the cattle stolen by him (*raptos*, ‘stolen’, 8.211), provides another linguistic link and reminds the reader of the thematic similarities between the two works.

Another such point of contact is afforded by Propertius’ description of Hercules’ violent entry into the grove of the Bona Dea:

... ille umeris postis concussit opacos,
nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim. (4.9.61-2)

... he struck the shady posts with his shoulder,
And the closed door bore not his angry thirst.

Hercules’ demolition of Cacus’ doorposts (*postes*, 4.9.61), here, recalls Virgil’s description of Augustus presiding over his triple-triumph, where he hangs his spoils upon proud doorposts (*superbi postes*, 8.721-22), which in turn recalls the proud doors (*superbae fores*, 8.196) upon which Cacus nails men’s heads, which itself evokes the description of proud Hercules (*superbus*, 8.202). Again, a simple linguistic reference announces the relationship between *Aeneid* 8 and 4.9 and the respective characters.

Hercules' self description as he attempts to gain entry into the grove of the Bona Dea suggests a further thematic connection between the two works. In a moment of self-reflection, he wonders if his appearance might be causing alarm among those within the grove:

'sin aliquem uultusque meus saetaque leonis
terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma ...' (4.9.45-46)

'But if anyone my appearance and lion's mane
Terrifies and my hair bleached by the Libyan sun ...'

The language evokes the description of the dead Cacus in the *Aeneid*, when the inhabitants of proto-Rome are mesmerised by the monsters appearance:

... nequeunt expleri corda tuendo
terribilis oculos, uultum uillosaque saetis
pectora semiferi atque extinctos faucibus ignis. (Aen. 8.265-67)

... They cannot sate their hearts by staring
At the terrifying eyes, face and hairy, shaggy
Chest of the beast and the fires extinguished from his throat.

Cacus' terrifying (*terribilis*) eyes, his face (*uultus*) and his chest bristling with hair (*saeta*) seem to foreshadow Hercules' concern that he might be terrifying (*terrere*) those inside the grove with his face (*uultus*) and hairy (*saeta*) lion's skin. There is also further correlation, here, between the respective appearances of Hercules and Cacus. While in *Aeneid* 8 it is Cacus who has the hairy chest (*uillosa pectora*, 8.266-67), in 4.9 it is an attribute of Hercules (*hirsutum pectus*, 4.9.49). This association between Cacus and Hercules, and the confusion of their physical appearance, suggests thematic affinity with *Aeneid* 8 where there is similar confusion and undermining of the (moral and/or physical) differences between the respective protagonists and their foes.

Propertius 4.9 offers further examples of this kind of subversion and obfuscation of the differences between hero and foe. Cacus, we are told, is a *hospes* (here, ‘host’, 4.9.7), a term that is also used by the kindly priestess (*alma sacerdos*, 4.9.51) of the grove to describe Hercules (here, ‘guest’, 4.9.53). Are we to see any moral difference between the two when they are both so called? There seems to be some confusion of *hospes* and *hostis* – while both can convey the meaning ‘stranger’, the former has generally positive connotations, while the latter suggests a negative sense.²³ Indeed the description of Cacus, above, is ambiguous and can be read positively and/or negatively in terms of Cacus’ characterisation:

sed non infido manserunt hospite Caco

incolumes.

(4.9.7-8)

Context necessitates the reading: ‘But the cattle did not remain safe on account of Cacus, the treacherous host.’ Yet equally, it could be read as: ‘But the cattle remained safe on account of Cacus not being a treacherous host.’ Context invites the reader to take *non* closely with *manserunt*, yet its juxtaposition with *infido* encourages another reading.²⁴ Once again, ambiguity surrounds the status of hero and foe.

The confusion of the attributes of hero and foe, of conqueror and conquered and of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ is a theme that Virgil and Propertius share in their respective portrayals of Hercules. So too is the status of Hercules as a paradigm for Augustus. Such similarities, therefore, signify the importance of *Aeneid* 8 as an interpretive aid for 4.9.

Propertius, then, alludes to Virgil’s erosion of moral and physical difference of the combatants in *Aeneid* 8 and engages in such practice himself. The fact that this technique of confusion of clean moral dichotomies is so apparent signifies the strong thematic relationship between the two works. In fact, familiarity with the themes and symbolism of the *Aeneid*, and especially those of the eighth book, is essential in order to unravel the complexities of 4.9. Propertius’ repeated allusion to the themes and language

²³ Indeed, the two words are, perhaps, etymologically related. See Hallam, G. H., *The Fasti of Ovid*. Macmillan and Co., London, 1881, n. (2.)629, p. 232. Note that line 2.629 in Hallam’s text – which is abbreviated and renumbered accordingly – corresponds to line 2.787.

²⁴ The possibility of such a reading is noted by Janan, M. W., ‘Refashioning Hercules: Propertius 4.9.’ *Helios* 25, 1998, n. 23, p. 71.

of Virgil's work strives to remind of this fact and encourage the reader to read 4.9 with *Aeneid* 8 as guide.

CHAPTER THREE:

Amphitryoniades

Although references to Augustus in Propertius 4.9 are purely allusive – nowhere is Augustus mentioned by name or referred to explicitly – Hercules’ status as a paradigm for the *princeps* and the strong thematic relationship between 4.9 and the *Aeneid*, where Hercules assumes just such a role, ensure Augustus’ contextual omnipresence throughout this elegy.¹

Appropriately, our examination of 4.9 in detail begins with a reading of the first word of the elegy – *Amphitryoniades* (‘son of Amphitryon’). This chapter focuses upon the significance of Propertius’ choice of first word and the function that it serves in this elegy. Hercules’ patronymic title announces Hercules’ status as an exemplar for Augustus in 4.9 – thereby inviting consideration of not only the depiction of Hercules, here, but also his counterpart in Augustus – and advertises the connection that this elegy shares with the eighth book of the *Aeneid*. Furthermore, *Amphitryoniades*, in itself, here, offers a critique of Augustan propaganda and thus points the way with regard to interpreting the elegy as a whole.

The very first word in Propertius 4.9 sets the tone and announces the key themes of the elegy. *Amphitryoniades*, as noted in the previous chapter, recalls Virgil’s usage of the word in the *Aeneid*. As Hercules serves as a paradigm for Augustus in that work, Propertius’ choice of allusive patronymic suggests that here, too, Hercules assumes such a role.² Additionally, we noted that the positioning of Hercules’ name in 4.9 – the first word – alludes to Horace’s *Odes* 3.14 which also begins thus (*Herculis*) and contains

¹ See Fox, M., ‘Propertius 4.9 and the Toils of Historicism.’ *MD* 43, 1999, pp. 159-60 and 164f., for the contextual or allusive references to Augustus and the distinction between the poetic and the real world with regard to 4.9. Fox’s aim, here, is to show the historical references that 4.9 makes to the ‘real world’. For ‘contextual’ in this sense, see Fox, ‘Propertius 4.9’, p. 160, who distinguishes between text and context. Lee, G., *Propertius. The Poems*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, pp. xvi-xvii, notes that experienced readers of poetry would be well aware of Hercules’ status as Augustus’ paradigm.

² Effe, B., ‘*Hercules Fervidus Ira*: Ein Motiv der “Aeneis” und seine Rezeption bei Properz und Ovid.’ *Hermes* 130, 2, 2002, p. 170, notes that Propertius’ use of *Amphitryoniades* immediately invites the reader to compare this elegy with the Hercules/Cacus episode in *Aeneid* 8.

specific comparison of Hercules and Augustus, again suggesting that Hercules here too is a paradigmatic figure. The first word of the elegy, then, encourages us to read Hercules as a model for Augustus.

A salient point to note in embarking upon an examination of *Amphitryoniades* approached from the perspective outlined above, is that such an impressive and imposing word, placed so prominently in a grand and epic opening, demands our attention and deserves close analysis. And what is immediately apparent, even from a cursory reading, is that *Amphitryoniades*, in this instance, is somewhat inappropriate; it is, in fact, a misnomer – Amphitryon, of course, is not the father of Hercules.³

Given Hercules' exemplary status, the fact that the false patronymic calls into question his paternity invites the reader, by way of comparison, to consider Augustus' own position as the 'son' of Caesar. Spencer argues, acknowledging Hercules' status in this regard, that *Amphitryoniades* emphasises Hercules' 'doubtful parentage', thereby taking a 'dangerous swipe' at Augustus' carefully orchestrated presentation of himself as *diui filius*.⁴ Indeed, there is a strong correlation between the respective paternal relationships of both Augustus and Hercules. Just as Amphitryon is not the biological father of Hercules, Caesar is not the biological father of Augustus; a fact that is highlighted with no little irony by Ovid in his 'praise' of Julius Caesar:

... neque enim de Caesaris actis
ullum maius opus quam quod pater exstitit huius. (*Met.* 15.750-51)

... for not among Caesar's deeds
Is any feat greater than that he became the father of [Augustus].⁵

³ Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book IV*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, n. 1, p. 136, explains that the patronymic is 'not strictly appropriate'. For Jupiter's 'seduction' of Alcmene, see, for example, Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles* 35-56.

⁴ Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in *Elegy* 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, p. 266.

⁵ Indeed, Ovid's ironic praise of Julius Caesar's 'fathering' of Augustus continues with a direct comparison between this 'achievement' and Julius' military successes – see *Met.* 15.752-59. Ovid, himself (*Her.* 9.44), draws attention to Amphitryon's 'fathering' of Hercules with the phrase *nec pater Amphitryon ... adest* ('nor is your father, Amphitryon ... here'). The juxtaposition of *nec* and *pater* highlights the falsehood of Amphitryon's status as 'father' of Hercules and invites the interpretation, 'your not father, Amphitryon'.

In addition to their somewhat doubtful paternity, Hercules and Augustus share semi-divine status – both are represented as not quite divine and yet not really mortal. That *Amphitryoniades* occupies half of the opening hexameter symbolises Hercules' half-god, half-mortal status.⁶ Additionally, the beginning of the patronymic itself – *AMPHITRYONI* – further hints at such symbolism with its incorporation of *amphi* ('on both sides', Latin *ambo*). Paradigmatically, then, Augustus' semi-divine status is also called into question.

Although the divine ancestry of the Julii was prominent in Augustan propaganda, leaving aside considerations of the authenticity or, indeed, plausibility of such claims, it must be remembered that Augustus, as the adopted son of Julius Caesar, was not of Julian lineage; whatever divinity there may have been in the blood of the Julii did not flow in Augustus' veins.⁷ The misleading patronymic, then, coupled with Hercules' paradigmatic status, encourages the reader to consider Augustus' position as the 'son' of Caesar and his status as *diui filius*.

That such an interpretation is offered to the reader is confirmed by the only other recorded occurrence of *Amphitryoniades* prior to the publication of Propertius' fourth book. While we have noted Virgil's employment of *Amphitryoniades* (*Aen.* 8.103 and 214) and its import with regard to interpretation of 4.9, as yet no attention has been given to its first (extant) recorded occurrence – Catullus 68b.112. Given that there are only these three instances recorded prior to Propertius' fourth book, each deserves attention and, as it happens, the allusion to Catullus proves significant. Furthermore, while the rarity of the patronymic provides a clear invitation to the reader to consider the Catullan reference, the allusion is strengthened by the respective situational representations of Hercules. Catullus' Hercules, arriving at the plains of Pheneus, cuts some sort of channel in order to drain a swampy area that in times of high water caused flooding in the city of the same name.⁸

⁶ Tränkle, H., *Die Sprachkunst des Properz und die Tradition der lateinischen Dichtersprache*. *Hermes Einzelschriften* 15, Wiesbaden, 1960, pp. 37-38. *Amphitryoniades* occupies eight of the seventeen syllables, ending at the third foot caesura.

⁷ Although Augustus was the great-nephew of Julius Caesar, he was not a member of the Julian *gens*.

⁸ For the flooding of the city in times of high water and Hercules' draining of the plain, see also Pausanias 8.14.1-3.

... tanto te absorbens uertice amoris
 aestus in abruptum detulerat barathrum,
 quale ferunt Grai Pheneum prope Cyllenaeum
 siccare emulsa pingue palude solum,
 quod quondam caesis montis fodisse medullis
 audit falsiparens Amphitryoniades. (Catullus 68b.107-12)

... engulfing you in so great a whirl, love's
 Surge drove you into a deep abyss,
 Like the one near Cyllenean Pheneus, that the Greeks say
 Dries the fertile earth with the swamp now drained;
 The one that once, with the heart of the mountain hewn out,
 It is said the false-fathered son of Amphitryon dug.

Propertius' Hercules, having arrived at the site of future Rome, grazes his cattle by the Velabrum:

et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues
 qua Velabra suo stagnabant flumine quoque
 nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas. (4.9.4-5)

And he settled his weary cattle, weary himself,
 Where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow and where
 The sailor used to glide through urban waters.

The Velabrum – an area of low ground between the Capitol and Palatine – was once prone to flooding by the Tiber and was underwater for prolonged periods.⁹ This area too was drained by the construction of a channel – the *cloaca Maxima* – in order to reduce

⁹ See Propertius 4.2.7-8, Ovid, *Fasti* 6.405-08 and Tibullus 2.5.33-34, for the Tiber's flooding of the Velabrum.

the likelihood of inundation.¹⁰ The topography of the respective areas strengthens the relationship between the two accounts of Hercules that is initially suggested by Propertius' use of *Amphitryoniades*. The point is that the similarities between the two tales of Hercules, both linguistic and spatial, indicate that Catullus' use of this patronymic is also important with regard to interpretation of this elegy.¹¹

What is so striking from our point of view is the extraordinary adjective *falsiparens* ('having a pretended father', 68b.112) – it is found only here in a memorable three word pentameter. If the false patronymic of 4.9, coupled with Hercules' status as a paradigm for Augustus, suggests an invitation to the reader to consider Augustus' own position in this regard, then the allusion to Catullus' *falsiparens Amphitryoniades*, strengthened by the spatial similarities, confirms the invitation. Indeed, such a reading is encouraged.

The uncertainty, then, with respect to Hercules' parentage and semi-divine status vicariously reflects Augustus' own tensions in this regard. Propertius draws attention to these inconsistencies by exposing the falsehood of Augustus' advertised claim to divinity based on Julian descent from Venus and Caesar's apotheosis – Augustus is not of Julian blood, nor the biological son of Caesar.

Amphitryoniades, additionally, reminds the reader of the exact events surrounding Jupiter's 'seduction' of Alcmena and the subsequent conception and birth of Hercules. The fact that an Augustan paradigm is the product of an adulterous liaison might well have struck a particular chord at Rome at the time of the publication of Propertius' fourth book, given that the controversial *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* had only recently been introduced.¹² Propertius reminds us further of Jupiter's coupling with Alcmena when he has Hercules call Juno *nouerca* ('stepmother', 4.9.44) – thereby acknowledging his true paternity.¹³ Indeed, Ovid goes so far as to call the liaison a *crimen* ('crime', *Met.*

¹⁰ For the construction of the *cloaca Maxima* and draining of the Velabrum, see Claridge, A., *Rome. An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 62.

¹¹ Richardson, L. Jr., *Propertius. Elegies I-IV*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977, n.1, p. 472, notes that Propertius' use of the patronymic recalls Catullus' *falsiparens Amphitryoniades*, although he does not elaborate.

¹² This law was introduced in 18 BC. For a brief overview of its effects, see Crook, J. A., *Law and Life of Rome*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1967, p. 106. For a more detailed synopsis, see McGinn, T. A. J., *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 140f.

¹³ This is not to be confused with her later status as mother-in-law following his marriage to Hebe.

9.24). Furthermore, Hercules' paradigmatic status invites examination of Augustus' own behaviour.

Previously it was noted that *Amphitryoniades*, as the first word of 4.9, alludes to Horace *Odes* 3.14, where Hercules' name occupies the same prominent position, and here again the allusion proves significant because Horace draws attention to Augustus' relationship(s) with his description of Augustus as Livia's special husband:¹⁴

unico gaudens mulier marito
prodeat iustis operata sacris. (*Odes* 3.14.5-6)

Rejoicing in her peerless husband, his wife
Comes forth having performed the due sacrifices.

While *unicus*, here, clearly invites the translation 'peerless, unique, unparalleled', it also conveys the more basic meaning of 'single, only', thereby drawing attention to Livia's marriage to Augustus.¹⁵ *Unicus*, if taken in the latter sense is, like *Amphitryoniades*, a misnomer – Livia had, of course, been married before.¹⁶ The allusion to Horace *Odes* 3.14, and its veiled reference to Augustus' marriage to Livia, encourages the reader of 4.9 towards the same considerations.

The contrast between Augustus' own moral and sexual behaviour and the behavioural standards imposed upon the Roman people through his legislative reforms was remarked upon even in ancient times. Suetonius (*Aug.* 62) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 5.1) contend that Augustus took Livia away from her then husband, Tiberius Nero, even though she was pregnant at the time.¹⁷ Antony, according to Suetonius (*Aug.* 69), accused Augustus of adultery, claiming that he took the wife of an unnamed ex-consul into a

¹⁴ Quinn, K., *Horace: The Odes*. Macmillan Education, Basingstoke, 1980, p. 270, remarks upon the significance of the description. Barrett, A. A., *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002, p. 125, has a brief discussion.

¹⁵ We might also see *unicus* as an invitation to the reader to consider Augustus' 'unparalleled' constitutional position. For a discussion of the translation(s) of *unicus* in connection with the circumstances of Augustus' marriage to Livia, see West, D., *Horace Odes III*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 127.

¹⁶ Livia married Tiberius Claudius Nero in 43 or 42 BC. For Livia's marriages, see Barrett, pp. 19f.

¹⁷ See Barrett, pp. 19-27, for the circumstances leading up to the union of Livia and Octavian.

bedroom with her husband looking on, returning after a while with her looking dishevelled and blushing.¹⁸ In fact, he often committed adultery (*Aug.* 69) – although his friends protested that it was in order to gather information from the wives of his enemies – and, indeed, Suetonius quotes a letter of Antony accusing Augustus of unfaithfulness towards Livia (*Aug.* 69). Livia, herself, is even accused of procuring women for her husband in his old age (*Aug.* 71). Cassius Dio (54.16) informs us that the senators, in urging Augustus to curb excessive sexual behaviour, noted his own numerous indiscretions. In no way, Dio tells us, did Augustus' words match his actions (54.16). In fact, according to Dio, Augustus hesitated in passing judgement upon a man who had married a woman with whom he had previously committed adultery (54.16), because he, himself, had been guilty of such behaviour in marrying Livia.¹⁹ While the veracity of the above accusations and the underlying political motivations may be (and should be) questioned, they do, nevertheless, indicate that Augustus' behaviour was discussed and considered hypocritical.

Amphitryoniades, then, evokes the circumstances surrounding Hercules' conception, which in turn raises the issue of adultery – a sensitive topic at the time of this elegy. Taken together with the allusion to Horace *Odes* 3.14, which draws attention to the circumstances surrounding Augustus' marriage to Livia, the hypocrisy of Augustus' own sexual morality is exposed.

That the relationships of Augustus and the Julii are a concern of this elegy is confirmed by a further reference in 4.9 that invites the reader to consider an earlier sexual scandal concerning the Julian family. In 62 BC, Publius Clodius Pulcher disguised himself as a woman and entered the house of Julius Caesar, the then Pontifex Maximus, where the vestal virgins, as was the custom, were performing sacrifices to the goddess during the celebration of the rites of the Bona Dea – a ceremony that was forbidden to men.²⁰ Far from having an interest in the rites themselves, however, Clodius is said to

¹⁸ For discussion of the claim that the unnamed woman in question might be Livia, herself, see Barrett, p. 24.

¹⁹ Scott-Kilvert, I., *Cassius Dio. The Roman History: The Reign of Augustus*. Penguin, London, 1987, n. (54) 38, p. 286.

²⁰ For a fuller account of events, see Plutarch, *Vit. Caes.* 9-10. For a detailed discussion, see Tatum, W. J., *The Patrician Tribune: Publius Clodius Pulcher*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1999, pp. 62-86. See Fox, 'Propertius 4.9', pp. 165-67, for a discussion of the relationship between the Clodius affair and Hercules' actions in 4.9.

have acted thus in order to seduce Caesar's wife, Pompeia, who as wife of the Pontifex Maximus was the leader of the celebrations. His actions caused such a scandal that the senate ordered an investigation into the desecration of the rites and Caesar thought it necessary to divorce Pompeia, claiming that it was essential for the wife of Caesar to be above suspicion, regardless of guilt.²¹ What is important with regard to our investigation is the remarkable similarities between this affair and Hercules' actions in 4.9.

Propertius' Hercules, having dispatched Cacus and recovered his cattle, heads off in search of a drink and finds himself at the entrance to a sacred grove that is a place of worship forbidden to men:

sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,
 lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus,
 femineae loca clausa deae fontisque piandos,
 impune et nullis sacra relecta uiris. (4.9.22-25)

But elsewhere he hears hidden girls laughing,
 Where a sacred grove had made a wood in a shady ring,
 An enclosed place of the woman's goddess and a reverend spring,
 And sacred rites revealed to no man with impunity.

Although the goddess, here, remains unnamed, she is universally identified as Bona Dea.²² Indeed, both her temple and Cacus' cave were situated upon the Aventine, and if we assume that her temple was founded somewhere near where the ancient grove was thought to exist, then Hercules, having just come from Cacus' lair, would, indeed, have been nearby.²³ Perhaps the strongest hint to the identity of the goddess in question is that

²¹ See Suetonius, *Iul.* 6 and 74, Cicero, *Dom.* 104f., *Har. Res.* 37f. and Plutarch, *Vit. Caes.* 10. Barrett, pp. 204-05, has a brief discussion.

²² See, for example, Butler, H. E. and Barber, E. A., *The Elegies of Propertius*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1933, n. 25, p. 372, Camps, *Book IV*, n. 25, p. 138, Galinsky, K., *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey, 1972, p. 153 and Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 23-6, p. 473. Cicero (*Har. Res.* 37), in fact, states that men were forbidden to know her name; perhaps explaining why Propertius does not name her.

²³ No degree of geographical accuracy or coherence on Propertius' behalf is implied – nor should it be expected – nevertheless, the elegy suggests a link between the two locations. Ovid, *Fasti* 5.148f., 1.550-52 and 6.80-82, locates the temple of Bona Dea and Cacus' lair on the Aventine. Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.225f.,

the rites of her worship, here, are forbidden to men – a point emphasised by *inclusas ... puellas, femineae loca clausa deae* and *nullis sacra resecta uiris*. This was an essential aspect of Bona Dea's worship.²⁴ Additionally, Bona Dea was also known as Fauna and was thought to be either the wife or daughter of Faunus, a deity primarily associated with the forest and particularly the sounds heard within them.²⁵ Accordingly, similar associations might be expected with this goddess – a link with nature is not unexpected given her role in female fertility – and, indeed, emphasis is placed upon these aspects also. The woodland setting is stressed with the almost tautological *lucus* and *nemus* and the hidden sound of the forest on this occasion is provided by the girls' laughter. We know also that dancing and merriment were associated with the worship of Faunus and Bona Dea and the girls within the grove, here, seem to be engaged in revelry. Although little is known of the Bona Dea or her worship, then, it is almost certain that she is the goddess referred to here.

Hercules tries to gain entry to the grove of the Bona Dea on the grounds that he is thirsty and needs a drink (4.9.33f.) and when apparently he has little success in persuading the *alma sacerdos* ('kindly priestess', 4.9.51) to admit him, he tries another tack and gives this extraordinary speech recalling his time spent in servitude to Lydian Omphale:

‘sin aliquem uultusque meus saetaque leonis
terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma,
idem ego Sidonia feci seruilia palla

situates Cacus' cave on the Aventine. For the location of the temple, see also the entry under 'Bona Dea' in Haselberger, L., Romano, D. G. and Dumser, E. A., *Mapping Augustan Rome: Journal of Roman Archaeology*. Supplementary Series Number 50, Portsmouth, 2002, pp. 68-69. See also entry under 'Bona Dea Subsaxana, Aedes' in Richardson, L. Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1992, pp. 59-60. Holleman, A. W. J., 'Propertius IV 9: An Augustan View of Roman Religion.' *RBPh* 55, 1977, pp. 79-84, attempts to unravel the geographical and topographical complexities in 4.9.

²⁴ G. P. Goold provides a very good summary of the particulars of Bona Dea on pp. 423-24 of his appendix to Frazer, J. G., *Ovid. Fasti* (Second Edition, Revised by G. P. Goold). Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1989. For a more comprehensive treatment of the worship of Bona Dea with regard to Propertius 4.9, see Holleman, pp. 79-92. For a detailed general treatment of the cult of Bona Dea, see Herbert-Brown, G., *Ovid and the Fasti. An Historical Study*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, pp. 131f.

²⁵ For a brief overview of the attributes of Faunus and Fauna/Bona Dea, see entries in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. (Third Edition). S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 249 (Bona Dea) and 590 (Faunus).

officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,
 mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus,
 et manibus duris apta puella fui.’ (4.9.45-50)

‘But if anyone my appearance and lion’s mane
 Terrifies and my hair bleached by the Libyan sun,
 I, too, in a Sidonian robe, carried out a slave’s
 Duties and the daily burden upon a Lydian distaff
 And a soft bra bound my hairy chest
 And I was a proper girl with hard hands.’

Hercules tries to enter the grove of Bona Dea by claiming honorary female status on the grounds that he once dressed as a girl! The correlation between Hercules’ admission of previous cross-dressing, here, in an attempt to gain entry to the grove of Bona Dea, and the Clodius episode of 62 BC is extraordinary.

The relationship between the two episodes is strengthened when one considers more closely the motives behind the respective attempts to enter the forbidden rites. Clodius was motivated by his desire to have (sexual) access to Pompeia, and sexual desire, too, drives Hercules to recall his own cross-dressing. Indeed, the situation is typically elegiac.²⁶ The point is reinforced by Hercules’ recollections of his own (literal) *servitium amoris* (‘love’s servitude’) during his time with Omphale. As was the case in that situation, here, too, Hercules can be seen to be motivated by desire.²⁷ It is the sound of girls that attracts him to the grove (4.9.23) and, in this context, his thirst (4.9.21) might easily be seen as sexual thirst; finally quenched only when he gains admittance to the grove and the girls within (4.9.61-63). Furthermore, as W. S. Anderson points out, the speech that he delivers at the entrance to the grove is more befitting of an elegiac paraclausithyron than of a (thirsty) hero/god²⁸ – indeed, Propertius tells us that Hercules’

²⁶ Anderson, W. S., ‘*Hercules Exclusus*: Propertius, IV, 9.’ *AJP* 85, 1964, 1-12, was the first to remark upon the similarities between Hercules’ situation in this elegy and the typical experiences of the *amator* (‘elegiac lover’).

²⁷ For the affair between Hercules and Omphale, see Propertius 3.11.17-20, Ovid, *Fasti* 2.303f. and *Her.* 9.53f.

²⁸ Anderson, W. S., ‘*Hercules Exclusus*’, p. 6.

speech is unworthy of a god (*iacit ante fores uerba minora deo*, ‘before the doors he hurls words demeaning for a god’, 4.9.32).²⁹ Both Clodius and Hercules, then, were motivated by sexual desire to cross-dress, or recall their cross-dressing.

Thus while the goddess of 4.9 remains unnamed, what little we know of the worship of Bona Dea and the extraordinary similarity between the events of 4.9 and the Clodius affair of 62 BC, that we know occurred at the celebration of the rites of the Bona Dea, confirm the identity of the goddess in this elegy.

While it seems certain, therefore, that Propertius alludes to the Clodius affair in 4.9, given that the scandal occurred almost half a century before the publication of this elegy, we might consider the relevance of the reference.³⁰ Firstly, recollection of Clodius’ entry into another man’s house in order to seduce his wife might evoke Octavian’s (alleged) seduction of the aforementioned wife in her husband’s house and, perhaps, the (alleged) circumstances of his union with Livia. Given the recent legislation, Augustus’ previous (sexual) behaviour quite probably assumed a special significance. Secondly, reference to the events of 62 BC recalls the dynastic connections between Antony and Octavian and the chaotic nature of Augustus’ own relationships.³¹ Clodius’ widow, Fulvia, went on to marry Antony and in order to cement the alliance between Antony and Octavian, Antony’s stepdaughter, Claudia – the daughter of Fulvia and Clodius – was betrothed to Octavian.³² We have, then, Octavian betrothed to the daughter of the man who had (allegedly) committed adultery with the once wife of his (adopted) father!

It is unlikely that Augustus wished to evoke the Clodius affair when he, himself, assumed the role of Pontifex Maximus. Upon taking office, he refused to move into the

²⁹ Hercules’ thirst and the significance of water in this elegy are discussed in the final chapter.

³⁰ Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 155, claims that the scandal of Clodius ‘did not diminish with the passing of time.’ The sacrilege of Clodius’ actions may, indeed, have remained undiminished, but the scandal itself must surely have slipped from the public consciousness almost half a century later. Caesar, himself, seems to have shown little ill will towards Clodius. Indeed, he refused to speak against Clodius at the trial (Suet. *Iul.* 74). Clodius, in fact, seems to have acted as a kind of agent for Caesar in expelling Cicero from Rome. It seems that becoming a plebeian assisted him to this end and thus Caesar granted his wish to transfer to this rank and gave permission for him to be adopted by a man younger than Clodius himself (59 BC), despite Cicero being involved in the prosecution of Clodius for the Bona Dea scandal. Clearly political motivations were to the fore (Suet. *Iul.* 20 and *Tib.* 2). Furthermore, Clodius was then elected tribune in 58 BC. Note that Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 155, dates the scandal to 55 BC. It is universally attributed to 62 BC so this former date is puzzling. Pompeia was divorced by Caesar in 61 BC. For dating, see Fox, ‘Propertius 4.9’, p. 165.

³¹ For the dynastic connections highlighted by the affair see Fox, ‘Propertius 4.9’, pp. 165–66.

³² See Barrett, p. 22 and Fox, ‘Propertius 4.9’, p. 165.

official home of the Pontifex Maximus on the Sacra Via, where Julius Caesar held residence and where the Clodius affair had taken place.³³ Indeed, in order to comply with the regulation that the Pontifex must live in a public residence, Augustus made part of his own house public property (Dio 54.27) and in doing so he quite literally distanced himself from these previous connections.³⁴

Some have suggested that the reference to the worship of Bona Dea in this elegy alludes to Livia's restoration of the temple of Bona Dea, thus adding greater (political) significance to the poem.³⁵ There is only a single extant reference evidencing Livia's restoration – in a brief treatment of the temple of Bona Dea in *Fasti*, Ovid states:

Livia restituit, ne non imitata maritum
esset et ex omni parte secuta suum. (*Fasti* 5.157-58)

Livia restored it, so that she might imitate her husband
And follow him in every respect.

From *Fasti* we know that the restoration had taken place by 8 AD, but this date is some twenty-four years later than the publication of Propertius' fourth book.³⁶ Spencer, claiming that an Augustan audience would have recognised the allusion to Livia's restoration of the temple of Bona Dea in this elegy, makes it sound as if Livia's

³³ Barrett, pp. 204-05.

³⁴ Herbert-Brown, p. 143, asserts that Augustus moved the residence of the Pontifex Maximus in order, in part, 'to eradicate the ignominious stain which polluted both its recent history and his adoptive father's career in that residence.'

³⁵ Holleman, p. 90, claims that 4.9 'is not unrelated to Livia's restoration of the Bona Dea temple.' Spencer, pp. 272-73, states that it is 'unlikely that an Augustan audience for this poem could be unaware of a further layer of connexion between Hercules, Augustus, the Ara Maxima, and the temple of Bona Dea. As noted by Ovid, *Fasti* 5.157-58, Livia chose to echo Augustus' temple restoration programme by renovating the temple of Bona Dea.' Fox, M., *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 169-70, claims that 4.9 addresses a subject that was 'close to Augustus' heart' – the restoration of the temple of Bona Dea by Livia. Furthermore, Fox, 'Propertius 4.9', pp. 164-65, states that one of the 'contextual factors ... at play ... is the involvement of Livia in the restoration of the shrine of the Bona Dea.'

³⁶ Book 4 appeared in 16 BC. Ovid states (*Tristia* 2.549-52) that his banishment to Tomis in 8 AD disrupted the composition of *Fasti*. The safest composition date, then, is in the years immediately preceding Ovid's banishment – it is difficult to be more accurate. See Herbert-Brown, pp. ix and 215f., for discussion of the dating and its difficulties.

restoration pre-dates 4.9.³⁷ Yet there is no evidence to suggest as much and, indeed, she is careful to describe this audience as ‘Augustan’ – here, a temporally vague term. In fact, it is inappropriate to regard this elegy as making any reference to the restoration.³⁸ Spencer admits as much in claiming that even if the restoration post-dates 4.9, then the (later) restoration ‘would have added an extra dimension to the poem’.³⁹ Such retrospective significance is unhelpful; while the restoration might well have occurred some years earlier – indeed, Propertius stresses the dilapidated condition of the goddess’s place of worship (*putris casa*, ‘dilapidated hut’, 4.9.28) in a possible contrast to its contemporary state – there is no evidence to suggest that Livia’s restoration had occurred prior to the publication of Propertius’ fourth book.⁴⁰

Hercules’ (eventually successful) attempts to gain access to the grove of Bona Dea in 4.9, then, evoke the Clodius affair of 62 BC, which in turn focuses attention upon Augustus’ own (sexual) behaviour and the tangled relationships of the Julii.

Amphitryoniades thus proves an especially important beginning to Propertius 4.9. It sets the tone and announces the elegy’s key themes by confirming Hercules’ exemplary status and establishing the relationship between 4.9 and the *Aeneid*. Furthermore, it casts the spotlight upon Augustus’ advertised claim to divinity and the hypocrisy of his sexual and moral behaviour. Moreover, *Amphitryoniades* draws attention to Julian relationships and (sexual) morality, highlighted also by the allusion to the Clodius affair. Additionally,

³⁷ Spencer, pp. 272–73.

³⁸ As Anderson, W. S., ‘*Hercules Exclusus*’, notes, n. 5. p. 2. Debrehun, J. B., *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003, n. 2, p. 119, thinks that Propertius’ treatment of Bona Dea in 4.9 suggests that Livia had not yet advertised her favouritism for Bona Dea. Such a claim, however, assumes that Propertius would not have offered a subversive treatment of the cult if Livia had been closely associated with it – an unsustainable assertion. The Pontifex Maximus was responsible for ensuring proper worship of Bona Dea and thus it seems likely that Livia’s restoration of the temple would have taken place following Augustus’ assumption of this role. As wife of the Pontifex Maximus she would have presided over the celebration of the rights. Augustus became Pontifex Maximus in 12 BC at the earliest (Dio 54.27).

³⁹ Spencer, n. 28, p. 273. Curiously, Spencer, n. 28, p. 273, claims that ‘[w]e can compare the significance of these potential successive readings to the simultaneous availability of Virgilian, Propertian, and Ovidian versions of Hercules for readers of Lucan *B.C.* 4.593–660’. The comparison is unwarranted – the above authors all indisputably pre-date Lucan, while there is no evidence to suggest that Livia’s restoration of the temple of Bona Dea predates Propertius 4.9. Spencer, p. 273, wonders why ‘Propertius’ Hercules, a proto-Augustan figure, destroy[s] a shrine closely associated with Livia’s patronage?’ The simple answer is that he does not – there is no evidence to suggest that at the time of the composition of 4.9 Livia was closely associated with the shrine.

⁴⁰ *Putris casa* might be seen as either contrasting the hut’s present restored state with its previous dilapidated condition – assuming that Livia had already restored it – or it might be seen as highlighting its present state of disrepair and neglect – assuming that Livia had not yet restored it.

Amphitryoniades evokes the circumstances of Jupiter's 'seduction' of Alcmena, thereby drawing attention to the fact that Hercules is the product of an adulterous liaison and in light of Augustus' own sexual morality, creating conflict between fidelity and adultery. As opening words go, then, *Amphitryoniades* proves especially significant.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Cacus Episode

Propertius 4.9 quite naturally divides into two distinct sections or episodes. The elegy begins with Hercules' arrival at the site of (future) Rome and his ensuing conflict with Cacus (4.9.1-20), before moving to the lesser known story of Hercules' attempts to assuage his thirst – a consequence of his exertions – by gaining admission to the celebration of the rites of Bona Dea (4.9.21-72). Hercules' encounter with Cacus in 4.9 offers an intriguing treatment of a well known Roman foundation legend in its own right while at the same time providing the key to interpreting the Bona Dea episode (and thus the work in its entirety) by laying down the thematic foundations for the elegy as a whole. This chapter focuses upon Propertius' treatment of the Hercules/Cacus episode and notes its thematic significance with regard to interpretation of the Bona Dea episode.

Lending great significance to Propertius' account of the Hercules/Cacus episode is Virgil's treatment of the same conflict in *Aeneid* 8 – a work with which 4.9 has many affinities. Most notably, Virgil presents Hercules in a morally ambiguous light and, in his defeat of Cacus, as a paradigm for Augustus and his victory over Antony at Actium, thereby adding a political element to the affair. Such concerns are thus naturally projected upon Propertius' treatment of Hercules' encounter with Cacus; indeed, the relationship between the two works is stressed by linguistic and thematic allusion.

The obvious starting point for our examination is to briefly summarise what we have already noted with regard to the Hercules/Cacus episode in the *Aeneid* and Propertius 4.9. Subject matter alone clearly suggests affinity between the respective accounts and, indeed, allusion confirms the strong bond – Hercules is *fessus* ('weary') in both versions of the tale (*Aen.* 8.232; Propertius 4.9.4 and 66) and referred to by his patronymic title, *Amphitryoniades* (*Aen.* 8.103 and 214; 4.9.1). Hercules assumes paradigmatic status in both the *Aeneid* and 4.9 – Hercules' defeat of triple-headed Geryon in the *Aeneid* and the three-headed Cacus in 4.9 symbolise Augustus' successful eastern campaigns and ensuing triple triumph. The imagery and language that link the respective

protagonists in the *Aeneid* not only with each other but also with their foes are reflected in 4.9. The essential (etymological and moral) opposition of Hercules (*alexikakos*, ‘avenger of evil’) and Cacus (*kakos*, ‘evil’) is troubled by their actual presentation both in 4.9 itself and in reference to the *Aeneid*; in 4.9, both Cacus and Hercules are referred to as *hospites* (‘guests’, ‘hosts’, 4.9.7 and 53) and both are cattle thieves; Hercules steals Geryon’s cattle, which, in turn, are stolen by Cacus – *fur* (‘thief’, 4.9.13-14) could equally refer to Cacus and/or Hercules.¹ In the *Aeneid*, Cacus is the shaggy beast (*uoltum uillosoaque saetis/pectora semiferi*, ‘the face and hairy, shaggy chest of the monster’, *Aen.* 8.265-67), while Hercules’ appearance is described in similar terms in 4.9 (*uultusque meus saetaque leonis*, ‘my face and shaggy lion’s mane’, 4.9.45; *hirsutum pectus*, ‘hairy chest’, 4.9.49).² There is as strong linguistic and thematic relationship, then, between the *Aeneid* and Propertius 4.9.

The oppositional presentation noted here falls broadly into two categories – what might be termed internal and external binarism. External binarism is typified by the conflict evident, on the surface at least, in the respective portrayals of Hercules (*alexikakos*) and Cacus (*kakos*); in terms of morality, each is presented as the polar opposite of the other. On the other hand, internal binarism – we might term this ‘duality’ – is evident in the internal opposition that is apparent in the protagonists in *Aeneid* 8 and Propertius 4.9. Hercules, for example, exhibits the same sort of anger as his supposedly polar opposite, Cacus, thereby revealing an internal discord of good and evil; the same is true of Aeneas and Augustus in the *Aeneid*. Similar opposition is evident in the application of the binary terms ‘robber’ and ‘robbed’. That Hercules is both a thief – he stole Geryon’s cattle – and a victim of robbery – Cacus steals these very same cattle when Hercules brings them to proto-Rome – highlights the internal oppugnancy inherent in Hercules’ portrayal. The Herculean title *Alexikakos* embodies this conflation with its symbolic incorporation of *kakos* – there is quite literally something of Cacus in Hercules.

¹ This point is discussed on the next page.

² We have seen that similar concerns are evident with regard to the application of *fur*, *furor* and *ira*. Note, also, that it is the sight of Cacus that is terrifying in the *Aeneid* (*nequeunt expleri corda tuendo/terribilis oculos, uoltum uillosoaque saetis/pectora semiferi* ..., ‘they are unable to satisfy their hearts by staring at the terrifying eyes, face and hairy, shaggy chest of the beast ...’, *Aen.* 8.265-67), while in 4.9, Hercules is concerned that his appearance is (similarly) alarming (*sin aliquem uultusque meus saetaque leonis/terrent* ..., ‘but if my face and shaggy lion’s mane terrifies anyone ...’, 4.9.45-6).

External binarism, then, is defined by polar opposition, while internal binarism, or duality, involves conflation of these oppositional extremes.

Given the status of both Hercules and Cacus as models for Augustus and Antony respectively, and that their conflict in 4.9 (just as in the *Aeneid*) thus vicariously represents the battle of Actium, the presentation of their encounter in terms of moral superiority is particularly significant. How then are the respective protagonists of 4.9 presented?

What emerges from even a cursory reading of the Hercules/Cacus episode in 4.9 is that (particularly in comparison to the *Aeneid*) very little attention is given to Hercules' defeat of Cacus. Aside from the scene-setting opening sentence (4.9.1-6), where his arrival at (future) Rome is described, Hercules' only actions in his conflict with Cacus are smashing down the doors of Cacus' lair (4.9.14) and striking Cacus dead with his club (4.9.15) – a mere two lines of action.³

Furthermore, these limited references prove ambiguous with regard to extracting any essential difference between Hercules and Cacus. When the cattle cry 'thief' and Hercules smashes down the doors of Cacus' cave (13-14), there is textual uncertainty with regard to the identity of the *fur* in question:

... furem sonuere iuuenci,
furis et implacidas diruit ira fores. (4.9.13-14)

As we have noted, this couplet is ambiguous and can be interpreted in one of two (or more) ways – 'The cattle cried out "We have been stolen!", and an angry Hercules smashed down the hostile doors of thieving Cacus', or 'The cattle cried out "Thief who stole us from Geryon, help!", and the anger of thieving Hercules smashed down Cacus' hostile doors' – or even a combination of both readings – 'The cattle cried out "We have

³ Once the cattle have alerted Hercules to their presence within Cacus' lair (4.9.13; *Aen.* 8.217-18), Hercules' battle with Cacus up to the point of Cacus' death occupies two lines in Propertius' version (4.9.14-15 – with the exception of Cacus' name, which appears as the first word on the following line) and forty-three lines in the Virgilian account (*Aen.* 8.219-261) – which then goes on to give a detailed account of the appearance of the dead body (*Aen.* 262f.) – see Warden, J., 'Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4.9.70f.' *Hermes* 110, 1982, 228-242, for a comparative analysis of the respective descriptions of Hercules' arrival at Rome. For the relative length of the treatments of Hercules conflict with Cacus, see Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', p. 230.

been stolen!”, and the anger of thieving Hercules smashed down Cacus’ hostile doors’, or ‘The cattle cried out “Thief who stole us from Geryon, help!”, and an angry Hercules smashed down the hostile doors of thieving Cacus.’ Whatever the case, the essential etymological and moral opposition of Hercules and Cacus is troubled by the ambiguous presentation – who is the thief and should we read *ira furis* (‘thief’s anger’) or *fores furis* (‘thief’s doors’)? Although context suggests that Cacus is the *fur*, here, and accordingly the preferable reading is *fores furis*, the alternative reading persists as a testament to the (moral) similarity of Propertius’ Hercules and Cacus, rather than proof of any difference between them.

Hercules’ entry through the *fores* into Cacus’ lair in the Propertian version of events – ambiguities aside – is achieved with the minimum of fuss when compared to the superhuman effort needed to gain access in the *Aeneid*. In 4.9, the action is compressed into a single line (*furis et implacidas diruit ira fores*, ‘[Hercules’] anger smashed down the thief’s hostile doors’, 4.9.14),⁴ in contrast to the thirty-four lines in Virgil’s account that finds Hercules trying in vain to enter the lair before smashing a huge rock through the roof of the cave and diving in through the hole (*Aen.* 8.225-58).

Additionally, the lair itself is much less imposing in 4.9; it is a *metuendum antrum* (‘cave to be feared’, 4.9.9) with *implacidae fores* (‘hostile doors’, 4.9.14) – no other details of the cave’s appearance (nor any of its size) are supplied.⁵ Indeed, from the details that are provided, it is almost impossible to construct any picture of the cave’s form – the qualifying adjectives furnish no physical details. Virgil describes an altogether more foreboding cave.⁶ It is a cave of vast size (*spelunca ... uasto summota recessu*, ‘a cavern driven down into a vast recess’, *Aen.* 8.193; *uastrum antrum*, ‘a vast cave’, *Aen.*

⁴ *Implacidus* is problematic in terms of translation. Lee, G., *Propertius. The Poems*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 124, suggests ‘implacable’, thereby maintaining something of the original vagueness. Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book IV*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, n. 14, p. 137, argues for ‘savage’ by citing Horace, *Odes* 4.14.10 – *Genaunos, implacidum genus*, ‘the Genauni, a savage tribe’. ‘Savage’ is perhaps too strong; ‘hostile’ seems more appropriate – see Paley, F. A., *Propertii Carmina*. Bell and Daldy, London, 1872, n. 14, p. 270, who suggests that *implacidus* is cognate with *anarsio* and *hostilis*. Note that the translation given here is in no way intended as definitive, given the above discussion of the potential ambiguities that the line presents – it is provided as such in the interests of simplicity.

⁵ For an alternative view, see Janan, M. W., ‘Refashioning Hercules: Propertius 4.9.’ *Helios* 25, 1998, p. 65, who claims that Cacus’ lair is ‘impressively fortified’. Yet in terms of fortification, the only detail provided is that the cave has *implacidae fores*. *Implacidus* conveys no suggestion of physical strength; indeed, the doors provide little, if any, impediment to Hercules’ entry.

⁶ Warden, J., ‘Epic into Elegy’, p. 231, calls Virgil’s description of Cacus’ cave ‘vivid and horrifying’.

8.217), a stony darkness (*saxo opaco*, ‘dark stone’, *Aen.* 8.211),⁷ hidden from the sun (*solis inaccessam radiis*, ‘inaccessible to the sun’s rays’, *Aen.* 8.195), bathed in fresh blood (*semperque recenti/caede tepebat humus*, ‘always with fresh/slaughter, the ground was warm’, *Aen.* 8.195-96) and decorated with the severed heads of men:

... foribusque adfixa superbis
ora uirum tristi pendebant pallida tabo. (Aen. 8.196-97)

... affixed to the proud doors
The faces of men hung pale in miserable gore.

It is a prison (for the stolen cattle – *custodita*, ‘imprisoned [cow]’, *Aen.* 8.218) with an immense iron-bound rock suspended by chains at the ready to bar entry through the reinforced entrance:

ut sese inclusit ruptisque immane catenis
deiecit saxum, ferro quod et arte paterna
pendebat, fultosque emuniit obice postis. (Aen. 8.225-27)

As he shut himself in, he broke the chains and the huge
Rock dropped, which was in iron by his father’s art
Suspended, and bridged the reinforced posts with its barrier.

It is described, variously, as an *ingens regia* (‘great palace’, *Aen.* 8.241-42), an *inferna sedes* (‘infernal place/home’, *Aen.* 8.244 – ‘hell’), *pallida regna* (‘pallid realm’, *Aen.* 8.244-45), an *immane barathrum* (‘huge abyss’, *Aen.* 8.245), an *ingens specus* (‘great cave’, *Aen.* 8.258) and a *domus atra* (‘black home’, *Aen.* 8.262). In contrast to Cacus’

⁷ Note the hypallagic expression. Metrical impossibility prevents the use of *saxea opacitate* (‘stony darkness’).

cave, as it appears in Virgil's account, where it is likened to hell itself, the lair as described by Propertius is entirely less imposing and dangerous.⁸

If we turn to Hercules' next deed in 4.9 – the actual killing of Cacus – we discover that it too is described in much less dramatic terms than in the Virgilian account, where Hercules leaps upon a flame-spewing Cacus and throttles him:

... seque ipse per ignem
 praecipiti iecit saltu, qua plurimus undam
 fumus agit nebulaque ingens specus aestuat atra.
 hic Cacus in tenebris incendia uana uomentem
 corripit in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens
 elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur. (Aen. 8.256-61)

... himself through the fire
 He threw in a head-long leap, where a wave of the thickest
 Smoke surges and black fumes blaze about the mighty cave.
 Here, Cacus spewing into the darkness vain fires,
 He grabs in a knot-like grip and, holding firm, strangles
 Until his eyes burst and his throat drains of blood.

In fact, in the comparatively tame Propertian version of events, the action is described rather obliquely in passive terms:

Maenalia iacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo. (4.9.15)

He lies dead, his tri-brows smote by the Maenalian branch.

⁸ In addition to *inferna sedes*, *pallidus* is also used of the Underworld or things associated with it – for example: *pallida Ditis aqua* ('Dis' dim water', Tibullus, 3.1.28); *pallidi fauces Auerni* ('Avernus' dim entrance', Seneca, *Phaedra* 1201); so too is *barathrum* – for example: *nec quisquam in barathrum nec Tartara deditur atra* ('no-one is given into the abyss or black Tartarus', Lucretius, 3.966); *Tartarei regina barathri* ('queen of Tartarus' abyss', Statius, *Thebaid* 1.85); and also *ater* – for example: see above from Lucretius; in his description of the Underworld, Virgil refers to an *atra silex* ('black rock', *Aen.* 6.602).

The contrast with the vivid, present tense account of Virgil is remarkable. Here, there is no description whatsoever of the actual fight – or even a fight – save for the passive, after-the-fact *pulsus* – the anticipated battle (narrative) is disappointingly replaced with an already dead Cacus.⁹ Hercules' role in the killing of Cacus is downplayed almost to the point of absence.

Further undermining the significance of Hercules' defeat of Cacus is the fact that the description of his founding of the Ara Maxima – established to commemorate his victory and the recovery of his cattle – is postponed. Rather than have Hercules set up his altar immediately following his successful rescue mission and thus end the Hercules/Cacus episode with a respectful degree of gravity, Propertius delays the description until after the Bona Dea episode, thereby juxtaposing the foundation of the altar with the destruction of the (proto) shrine of Bona Dea – an altogether less heroic action¹⁰ – and suggesting that the latter action was the reason for the commemoration.¹¹ Although the description is delayed, Propertius suggests that the altar was indeed established following the recovery of the cattle:

‘Maxima quae gregibus deuota est Ara repertis,
ara per has’ inquit ‘maxima facta manus.’ (4.9.67-68)

‘The Ara Maxima, which was vowed for my flock recovered,
Was’, he said, ‘made the greatest altar through these hands.’

The perfect tenses of *deuota est* (4.9.67) and *facta* (4.9.68) suggest that the altar was already established when Hercules makes his dedicatory speech.¹² In fact there seems to

⁹ As Warden, ‘Epic into Elegy’, p. 233, notes, the actual killing is ‘bypassed’.

¹⁰ As noted by Galinsky, K., *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey, 1972, p. 154.

¹¹ Anderson, W. S., ‘Hercules Exclusus: Propertius, IV, 9.’ *AJP* 85, 1964, p. 4, Lindheim, S. H., ‘Hercules Cross-Dressed: Unmasking the Construction of the Propertian Amator in Elegy 4.9.’ *AJP* 119, 1998, p. 42 and Warden, J., *Fallax Opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1980, p. 107, all assert that Hercules establishes the Ara Maxima following the Bona Dea episode.

¹² As noted by Paley, n. 20, p. 270 and followed in more detail by Cairns, F., ‘Propertius 4.9: “Hercules Exclusus” and the Dimensions of Genre.’ in K. Galinsky (Ed.), *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* P. Lang (Pub.), Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 68. Although attempts to establish fictional chronology within works of ancient poetry are often misguided because such efforts

be a passing reference to some sort of commemoration immediately after the cattle are rescued, when Hercules addresses his cattle:¹³

‘aruaque mugitu sancite Bouaria longo:
nobile erit Romae pascua uestra Forum.’ (4.9.19-20)

‘Hallow the Bovarian fields with a long low:
Your pasture will be Rome’s noble Forum.’¹⁴

Regardless of the time of the founding of the Ara Maxima, however, the description of the event is deliberately delayed and, accordingly, following Hercules’ victory, the lack of commemoration and celebration of his defeat of Cacus downplays its significance.

Hercules and his actions, then, with regard to his battle with Cacus, receive scant attention in the Propertian version of the tale. Gone is the civilising, righteous monster-killer of the *Aeneid* and gone, too, is the (metrically and theatrically) epic battle against a dangerous and formidable foe.

Given the limited references to the actions of Hercules, the portrayal of Cacus is imbued with added significance. If it is difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion with regard to the presentation of Hercules, due to the limited attention that his actions receive in his conflict with Cacus, then we must turn to the portrayal of Cacus to assist in interpretation.

Propertius offers a rather limited portrait of Cacus; Virgil paints a more detailed picture. In the *Aeneid*, Cacus is a half-human monster (*semihomo*, ‘half-human’, *Aen.* 8.194; *semifer*, ‘half beast/monster’, *Aen.* 8.266; *monstrum*, ‘monster’ *Aen.* 8.198), of frightening appearance (*dira facies*, *Aen.* 8.194; *informe cadauer*, ‘monstrous body’, *Aen.*

necessarily assume (often absent) temporal accuracy and/or consistency, in this case the attempt is worth such a risk, because the time of Hercules’ foundation of the Ara Maxima is important with regard to the significance of his defeat of Cacus.

¹³ Cairns, p. 69, claims that 4.9.16-20 ‘contain an oblique record’ of the altar’s foundation. Richardson, L. Jr., *Propertius. Elegies I-IV*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977, p. 471, thinks that the cattle ‘are to consecrate the Forum Boarium as though they were a college of priests laying the bounds of a *templum*.’

¹⁴ Fox, M., *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp.172-3, claims that the foundation of the Forum Boarium and the Ara Maxima are separated in 4.9.

8.264) and immense size (*magna moles*, *Aen.* 8.199), with terrifying eyes (*terribilis oculos*, *Aen.* 8.265) and shaggy hair (*uilloaque saetis/pectora*, ‘chest shaggy with hair’, *Aen.* 8.266-67), who roars like an animal (*rudens*, ‘roaring’, *Aen.* 8.248), and spews black fires and smoke (*atros/ore uomens ignis*, ‘spewing black fires from his mouth’, *Aen.* 8.198-99; *faucibus ingentem fumum .../euomit*, ‘he spews out dense smoke from his throat’, *Aen.* 8.252-53; *incendia uana uomentem*, ‘spewing vain fires’, *Aen.* 8.259). Propertius, however, offers only one physical detail of Cacus’ appearance: he has three heads (*tria ora*, ‘three mouths’, 4.9.10; *tria tempora*, ‘three brows’, 4.9.15). Although the triple-headed nature of Propertius’ Cacus contains the suggestion of monstrosity, he is no longer the immense, frightening and dangerous foe of the *Aeneid*.

As noted, Cacus is called a *hospes* (4.9.7); a name applied also to Hercules (*parce oculis, hospes*, ‘spare your eyes, guest/stranger’, 4.9.53), thereby suggesting similarity rather than distinction between the two protagonists. Additionally, the reference to Cacus’ hospitality occurs in yet another ambiguous couplet:

sed non infido manserunt hospite Caco
incolumes ... (4.9.7-8)

While context on this occasion invites us to take *non* closely with *manserunt* – ‘They [the cattle] did not remain safe because Cacus was a treacherous host’ – its apposition with *infido* encourages it to be taken with that adjective – ‘They remained safe because Cacus was not a treacherous host’.¹⁵ In fact, the cattle do remain safe – they are rescued, unharmed, by Hercules (4.9.16f.) – thereby lending added credibility to the latter reading. That both Hercules and Cacus are *hospites*, and that the reference to Cacus’ hospitality occurs in an ambiguous couplet – a couplet that can be read in a favourable light with regard to Cacus’ characterisation – again serves to equate and conflate rather than differentiate the respective combatants.

Additionally, in Propertius’ account, Cacus is a resident of the area (*incola*, 4.9.9). Cacus’ status as an *incola* thus casts doubt upon the ethical validity of Hercules’ violent actions in the recovery of his cattle and the slaying of Cacus; Cacus’ cattle thievery

¹⁵ A reading recognised by Janan, ‘Refashioning Hercules’, n. 23, p. 71.

seemingly violates his obligations as resident of the area and thus as a host of Hercules, but Hercules' overly violent rescue mission and subsequent murder of Cacus, without a single word exchanged or any hint of violence (or even resistance, save perhaps for shutting his doors) on Cacus' behalf, suggests little respect for his obligations as a guest.¹⁶ Indeed, Hercules' actions might be seen as thuggish and excessive – Cacus is bludgeoned to death for the (ultimately) harmless theft of the cattle. Moreover, in the previous line, occupying the same prominent position as *incola*, Hercules' cattle are described as (*non*) *incolumes* ('safe', 4.9.8). The fact that Hercules' cattle and Cacus are described in such a way (*INCOLa* – *INCOLumes*) suggests affinity between the protagonists rather than difference.¹⁷

The fact that Cacus is a *hospes* suggests that he was obliged to (or perhaps even did, at least to some extent) offer Hercules hospitality.¹⁸ Moreover, the reference to the pollution of Jove (*furto polluit ille Iouem*, 'He dishonoured Jove with the theft', 4.9.8) suggests that hospitality is an issue in the context of the elegy; it is Jove's status as the protector of strangers and god of hospitality that Cacus has apparently sullied (*polluit*).¹⁹ Interestingly, Hercules has something of a history in the context of hospitality, murder and stock rustling. In the *Odyssey*, Hercules welcomes Iphitos into his house as a guest (ξεῖνον, *Od.* 21.27) only to murder him in order to steal his horses.²⁰

ἐπεὶ δὴ Διὸς υἱὸν ἀφίκετο καρτερόθυμον,
 φῶθ' Ἡρακλῆα, μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων,
 ὅς μιν ξεῖνον ἔοντα κατέκτανεν ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
 σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ θεῶν ὅπιν αἰδέσαστ' οὐδὲ τράπεζαν,
 τὴν ἣν οἱ παρέθηκεν· ἔπειτα δὲ πέφνε καὶ αὐτόν,
 ἵππους δ' αὐτὸς ἔχε κρατερώνυχας ἐν μεγάροισι. (Od. 21.25-30)

¹⁶ In fact, in Livy's account of Hercules' encounter with Cacus (1.7.4f.), where Cacus is described as an *accolla* ('inhabitant', 1.7.5) – the close relationship between *incola* and *accolla* suggesting affinity between the respective accounts – Cacus' fellow inhabitants are outraged at Hercules' behaviour (1.7.9).

¹⁷ Perhaps *incola* and *incolumes* are cognate in some way.

¹⁸ Cacus as a resident (*incola*, 4.9.9) seemingly allowed Hercules to rest his cattle in the area without objection.

¹⁹ Camps, *Book IV*, n. 7-8, pp. 136-37.

²⁰ Eden, P. T., *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*. Brill, Leiden, 1975, n. 205f., p. 80, notes this passage in his discussion of Cacus' theft of Hercules' cattle in the *Aeneid*.

Then [Iphitos] came to the strong-hearted son of Zeus,
 The man Hercules, guilty of monstrous deeds,
 Who killed him while he was a guest in his house,
 Wicked man, without regard for the eye of the gods, nor the table
 He had set for him. When he had killed him,
 He kept the strong-hoofed horses in his halls.

More importantly, however, the reference to Cacus' hospitality recalls another version of the myth where his charity is more prominent.²¹

Diodorus Siculus' version of Hercules' arrival at the site of (future) Rome (4.21.1-4) is rather different from that which we find in Virgil and Propertius. In Diodorus' account, Hercules happens upon a somewhat unfamiliar Cacus:

ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ὄντες ἀνδρῶν Κάκιος καὶ
 Πινάριος ἐδέξαντο τὸν Ἡρακλέα ξενίοις ἀξιολόγοις
 καὶ δωρεαῖς κεχαρισμέναις ἐτίμησαν. (4.21.2)

Here, Cacus and Pinarius, being among the distinguished men,
 greeted Hercules with marked hospitality and honoured him with
 kindly gifts.

In this version of the tale, Cacus is entirely absent and has been replaced by Cacus. Hercules is welcomed by an altogether different character both in name and demeanour; in place of the monstrous cattle thief is the wholly human (ἄνθρωπος) and clearly hospitable Cacus.

²¹ Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', n. 7, p. 232, claims that Propertius' *hospite Caco* (4.9.7) alludes to the hospitality shown towards Hercules by Diodorus Siculus' Cacus and that Propertius, in general seems to be drawing on non-Virgilian sources when he mentions Cacus' hospitality. Janan, M. W., *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, pp. 136-38, notes that references to Cacus' hospitality recall other accounts of the tale.

Further reference to the version of the tale offered in Diodorus Siculus' account can be found in the opening sentence of 4.9; when Hercules arrives at the site of (future) Rome, he comes to the Palatine:

uenit ad inuictos pecorosa Palatia montis. (4.9.3)

He came to the sheepy Palatine, unconquered hill.

The reference to the Palatine seems somewhat odd, given that Hercules' battle with Cacus and his assault upon the grove of Bona Dea almost certainly take place (at least in the literary tradition) upon the Aventine – both Virgil and Ovid locate Cacus' lair upon the Aventine (*ter totum feruidus ira/lustrat Auentini montem*, 'thrice, burning with rage, [Hercules] scours the whole Aventine mount [seeking access to Cacus' lair]', *Aen.* 8.230-31; *Cacus, Auentinae timor atque infamia siluae*, 'Cacus, the terror and disgrace of the Aventine wood', *Fasti* 1.551; *Cacus Auentinam sanguine tinxit humum*, 'Cacus stained the Aventine earth with his blood', *Fasti* 6.82) and Ovid situates the temple of Bona Dea upon the same hill (*Fasti* 5.148f.). Diodorus, however, locates the scene of Hercules' encounter with Cacus and the inhabitants of proto-Rome upon the Palatine; the inhabitants who greet Hercules at the time of his arrival have their dwellings there:

τότε δέ τινες τῶν ἐγχωρίων κατόκουν ἐν τῷ νῦν
καλουμένῳ Παλατίῳ ... (4.21.1)

Then, some of the inhabitants lived upon what is now
called the Palatine ...

Indeed, according to Diodorus, the *scalae Caci*, situated on the Palatine, are named after the Cacus who dwelt there and welcomed Hercules:²²

²² For the location of the steps and the general view that the steps are named after the monstrous Cacus, see Claridge, A., *Rome. An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 125. Both Virgil (*Aen.* 8.230-32) and Ovid (*Fasti* 1.551) locate Cacus' lair upon the Aventine. Propertius' Cacus steals Hercules' cattle from the region of the Palatine where they were pastured (4.9.3-6), suggesting that

τοῦ δὲ Κακίου ἐν τῷ Παλατίῳ κατάβασίς ἐστιν
 ἔχουσα λιθίνην κλίμακα τὴν ὀνομαζομένην ἀπ'
 ἐκείνου Κακίαν, οὗσαν πλησίον τῆς τότε γενομένης
 οἰκίας τοῦ Κακίου. (4.21.2)

As for Cacus: on the Palatine there is a descent with a stone
 stairway named 'Cacius' [stairs]' after him, which is near
 to Cacus' original house.

Despite the briefness of Diodorus' account, he gives a further reference to the Palatine when he describes Hercules' reaction to the hospitality that he receives from its inhabitants:

ὁ δ' οὖν Ἡρακλῆς ἀποδεξάμενος τὴν εὖνοιαν
 τῶν τὸ Παλάτιον οἰκούντων ... (4.21.3)

And Hercules gladly received the goodwill of those who
 dwelt on the Palatine ...

The Palatine figures prominently, then, in Diodorus' account of Hercules' arrival at the site of (future) Rome. The fact that Hercules first comes to the Palatine in Propertius' account strengthens the allusion to Diodorus' version, initially suggested by the reference to Cacus' hospitality.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions the Palatine in his version of the tale (*Ant. Rom.* 1.39.1f.); a tale that is also at variance with the Propertian and Virgilian accounts with regard to the characterisation of Cacus.²³ Dionysius' Cacus displays not a hint of

he lived nearby. The steps lead from the Palatine to the Velabrum and thus Propertius' account, unlike that of Virgil and Ovid, accords geographically with the notion that the steps were named after Cacus. The steps, then, might well have been named after either Cacus or Cacius, or perhaps some conflation of both.

²³ It is uncertain when, exactly, Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* were published; some early parts of the work may have pre-dated Propertius' fourth book, but we cannot be sure. Nonetheless, his work provides details

monstrousness. Even in Dionysius' report of what he refers to as the mythical/legendary version of the tale (τὰ μυθικώτερα, 'more mythical/less credible account', 1.39.1) (1.39.1f.) – as opposed to what he considers to be the more believable account (τὰ ἀληθέστερα, 1.39.1; ὁ ἀληθέστερος, 'truer, more factual account', 1.41.1) (1.41.1f.), where Hercules is portrayed as a righteous general (στρατηλάτης, 1.41.1) who conquers the barbarous chieftain, Cacus (δυνάστης βάρβαρος, 1.42.2) – Cacus appears entirely human.²⁴ Despite being called a robber (ληστής, 1.39.2; κλώψ, 1.39.4)²⁵ and his neighbours being pleased with his demise (1.40.1), he is depicted as living among other herders whom he calls out to for help (twice – τοὺς τε πλησίον ... ἐπιβοῶντος, 'he called upon those nearby', 1.39.3; τοὺς εἰωθότας αὐτῷ συναγρᾶν εἰν ἀνεκάλει, 'he called for those used to living with him', 1.39.4) when he is confronted by Hercules (1.39.3-4), suggesting that he at least thought that his fellow neighbours might come to his aid. Cacus, again, emerges as an altogether less terrifying character than the monster depicted by Virgil and, to a lesser extent, Propertius.

Livy, in his account of Hercules' arrival at proto-Rome, also has Cacus imploring his fellow shepherds to come to his assistance when threatened by Hercules, upon the latter's discovery of the theft of his cattle:²⁶

quem cum uadentem ad speluncam Cacus ui prohibere conatus

of versions of various foundation stories that had survived to the Augustan era, regardless of the actual date of publication.

²⁴ For discussion of the relationship between Dionysius' 'mythical' and 'factual' accounts, see Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, pp. 78-80. In what he claims is the more believable account, Dionysius portrays Hercules as a righteous general destroying oppressive tyrants and marauding bands of murderous savages and imposing lawful institutions and rulers (1.41.1). He sees Hercules as a pacifying, liberating, civilising hero who unites peoples, builds cities, drains swamps and builds infrastructure (1.41.1). He depicts Hercules as the head of a great army arriving in Italy, having conquered Spain, in order to subjugate and rule over the people (1.41.2). One of the conquered was Cacus, a savage chieftain who had opposed Hercules and had stolen his booty in a night time raid (1.42.1-2). Evander and his followers were among those who assisted Hercules and who were entrusted with the rule of the region following Hercules' departure (1.42.3).

²⁵ Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', n. 7, p. 232, considers Propertius' description of Cacus as a *raptor* ('robber', 4.9.9) to be a reference to Dionysius' Cacus, who is said to be ληστής τις ἐπιχώριος, 'a certain resident robber', 1.39.2). Perhaps some support for this claim is provided by *incola* ('resident', 4.9.9) at the beginning of the line, which corresponds with Dionysius' ἐπιχώριος.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of Livy's 'historical accuracy' in his treatment of Hercules' encounter with Cacus, see Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, pp. 100-05. For an overview of the obvious similarities and differences between the respective versions of Hercules' encounter with Cacus found in the Latin authors (Livy, Virgil, Propertius and Ovid), see Nagore, J. and Perez, E., 'El Episodio de Hercules y Caco en Cuatro Autores Latinos.' *Argos* 5, 1981, 35-51.

esset, ictus claua fidem pastorum nequiquam inuocans morte
occubuit. (1.7.7)

Although Cacus tried to stop [Hercules] by force when he strode
towards the cave, having been struck by his club, he fell dead,
calling in vain for the pledged protection of the shepherds.

In Livy's version of events – unlike in Dionysius' account, where the herdsmen welcome the news of Cacus' death because they detested his thieving ways (1.40.1) – Cacus' fellow shepherds, on this occasion, display no pleasure at Cacus' death. In fact, it seems that they do come to his assistance – albeit belatedly – whereupon they complain to Evander and accuse Hercules of murder:

is tum Euander concursu pastorum trepidantium circa aduenam
manifestae reum caedis excitus postquam facinus facinorisque
causam audiuit. (1.7.9)

Then this Evander, roused by the gathering of agitated shepherds
around the stranger [whom they] accused of open murder, learned
of the crime and the reason for the crime.

Here, then, Cacus is, once again, an entirely human shepherd (*pastor ... nomine Cacus*, 'a shepherd by the name of Cacus', 1.7.5) – there is no hint of monstrosity – who appears to have lived peacefully among, and had friendly relationships with, his fellow shepherds.

That the reader of Propertius 4.9 is invited to consider Livy's account of Hercules' conflict with Cacus is suggested allusively.²⁷ There is remarkable similarity

²⁷ For the dating of Livy's first book, see Luce, T. J., 'The Dating of Livy's First Decade.' *TAPA* 96, 1965, pp. 209-11. The book was most likely either composed, edited or revised between 27 and 25 BC, although it is impossible to be sure of the date or manner of publication – some books, pentads or decades may have been published prior to the completion of the work as a whole, which may, in fact, have been begun as early as 33 BC. For the earlier date, see Burton, P. J., 'The Last Republican Historian: A New Date for the Composition of Livy's First Pentad.' *Historia* 49, 2000, 429-446. For support of the claim that Propertius had knowledge of Livy's work when he composed 4.9, see Woodman, A. J., 'Propertius and Livy.' *CQ* 48,

between Propertius' description of Cacus' theft of Hercules' cattle (*auersos cauda traxit in antra boues*, 'he dragged the cows backwards by the tail into the cave', 4.9.12) and that found in Livy (*auersos boues ... caudis in speluncam traxit*, 'he dragged the cows backwards by their tails into the cavern', 1.7.5).²⁸ *Auersos*, *boues* and *traxit* appear unchanged in both accounts; the ablative singular *cauda* has simply changed from the plural in Livy's version; the only degree of distinction – minimal at most – is the synonymic substitution of *antra* for *speluncam*. The degree of linguistic correlation in this instance between Propertius and Livy is much stronger than the corresponding descriptions of Propertius and Virgil, or Livy and Virgil.

Another point of reference is evident between the accounts of Propertius and Livy in the respective descriptions of Cacus as a resident of the area (*incola Cacus erat*, 'Cacus was the resident', 4.9.9; *accola eius loci, nomine Cacus*, 'the inhabitant of the place, called Cacus', 1.7.5).²⁹ That Cacus' status as the resident inhabitant of the area is mentioned in both instances immediately preceding the description of his theft of Hercules' cattle – an action that is described in remarkably similar language – strengthens the allusion intimated by the etymologically (and aurally) similar *incola* and *accola*.

The descriptions of the crimes of Hercules and Cacus in the Propertian and Livian versions of their encounter also provide a linguistic connection between the respective accounts. Livy has the shepherds who respond to Cacus' cries for help upon being attacked accuse Hercules of *manifestae caedis* ('obvious/flagrant murder', 1.7.9). In Propertius' account, it is Cacus who commits a similarly patent crime – *manifestae rapinae* ('obvious/flagrant theft', 4.9.11).

2, 1998, 568-69, who claims that Propertius' third book contains phraseology identical to that of Livy. He concludes that 'Propertius must have been reading Livy.'

²⁸ Note the wonderfully visual, artistic rendering of Propertius' description. The turned about cows (*auersos*) begin the line with their tails (*cauda*) pointing towards the cave. Cacus, the subject of the verb (*traxit*), is positioned between the cows' tails and the cave as he drags the cows towards his lair. Finally, the cows pass into the cave and, now inside, they end the line. Note, also, the similarity of the above accounts with that found in Virgil (*atque hos .../cauda in speluncam tractos ...*, 'he dragged these [cows] by the tail into the cave', *Aen.* 8.209-10). For the linguistic similarities (and, thus, relative dating) between the Hercules/Cacus episodes found in Livy and Virgil, see Paratore, E., 'Hercule et Cacus chez Vergile et Tite-Live,' in H. Bardon and R. Verdière (Eds.), *Vergiliana. Recherches sur Virgile. Roma Aeterna* 3, Brill, Leiden, 1971, 260-82. For specific discussion of the above lines in the respective accounts, see pp. 260 and 280-81. Alternatively, Eden, n. 210, p. 81, considers that 'the words are too commonplace and inevitable to prove any borrowing in any direction.' Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', n. 9, p. 233, recognises the allusion to Livy.

²⁹ The claim was first made by Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', n. 7, p. 232, who states, '*incola* echoes Livy's ... *accola*'.

It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that Propertius alludes to Livy's version of Hercules' encounter with Cacus; and in Livy's account Cacus emerges as an entirely human shepherd – again, there is not a hint of monstrosity. In fact, Livy, with the exception of Diodorus, presents, perhaps, the most flattering portrait of Cacus. For in his version of the tale, Cacus' neighbours come to his aid, condemn the actions of Hercules and display no suggestion of pleasure, or even relief, at Cacus' death.³⁰

Reaction (or lack thereof) to Cacus' death in the various accounts of his demise is instructive with regard to interpretation of the significance of the event in a moral sense. In the *Aeneid* – at the risk of oversimplification – Hercules' defeat of Cacus represents (at least in etymological terms) the triumph of good over evil – *alexikakos* defeats *kakos*. Such an interpretation is confirmed and strengthened by the fact that the narrator of the tale, Evander (eu=) a)nh/r, 'good man'), extols the virtue of Hercules' victory and presents him as a kind of role model for Aeneas. That Evander, symbolising the side of right, ritually celebrates Hercules' victory and worships at the Ara Maxima (*Aen.* 8.271f.), and that he and his followers clearly rejoice at the monster's death (*ex illo celebratus honos laetique minores/seruauere diem*, 'from that time the triumph has been celebrated and joyous descendents have preserved the day', *Aen.* 8.268-69) emphasises the point.³¹

Responses (or lack of response) to Cacus' death in Propertius' account and other versions of the tale, however, do not provide such universal support for Hercules' retaliatory form of justice. Evander and his followers are entirely absent in Propertius' version of the tale;³² as such, there is no justification or reinforcement of the moral virtue or righteousness of Hercules' slaying of Cacus that is provided by the presence, words and actions of Evander in *Aeneid* 8.³³ In the absence of Evander's adjudication in favour

³⁰ Livy's description of Cacus' death is also similarly abrupt when compared to Propertius' account.

³¹ It is somewhat unclear whether Evander was an eyewitness to Hercules' defeat of Cacus – he seems to speak as though this was the case – or simply the narrator of the tale. See, Eden, n. 268-72 (I), p. 92; Gransden, K. W., *Virgil Aeneid Book VIII*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, n. 268, p. 117; Servius, *ad Aen.* 8.268.

³² As noted by Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme*, p. 154.

³³ Janan, *The Politics of Desire*, p. 136, states that the omission of Evander ('good man') in 4.9 eliminates the clean contrast between 'good' and 'evil' that is represented by Evander and Cacus ('evil') in the *Aeneid*. The contrast between 'good' and 'evil' in 4.9, however, is still clearly evident, although, perhaps, not so plainly expressed. The names of the respective protagonists still display a similar degree of opposition – Hercules as *Alexikakos* against Cacus (*Kakos*). The omission of Evander, rather, reinforces

of Hercules, it is left to the reader to determine the moral superiority or otherwise of the victor – no easy task given the ambiguous portrayal of the respective combatants. Additionally, given Evander’s absence, Cacus remains as the only moral signifier (‘evil’) – in an etymological sense – and thus the characterisation of Hercules can only be defined in terms of this negative other; he can only be ‘evil’ or ‘not evil’ – indeed, *alexikakos* defines him in just such a way – depending on the degree of correlation between the respective portrayals of the combatants.

In Diodorus’ account, too, Evander makes no appearance, yet, as we have seen, in his version of the tale, Cacus is presented entirely favourably and suffers no harm at the hands of Hercules. In Dionysius’ version of the tale, despite the inhabitants of the area considering Hercules’ killing of Cacus a piece of good luck (ληστοῦ μέγα εὐτύχημα τὴν ἀποβολὴν ἐποιοῦντο, ‘they considered the demise of the robber a great piece of fortune’, 1.40.1), it is only upon the discovery of his identity and lineage (τοῦνομα καὶ τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ, ‘his name and descent’, 1.40.1) that Evander initiates honours on his behalf (1.40.2f.). Furthermore, the reason given for the hastily improvised celebration (βωμὸν αὐτοσχέδιον ὑπὸ σπουδῆς ἰδρύεται, ‘due to his haste, he set up an improvised altar’, 1.40.2) is Evander’s desire to become the first man to honour Hercules as a god (φθάσαι βουλόμενος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους Ἡρακλέα θεῶν τιμαῖς πρῶτος ἱλασάμενος, ‘he wanted to outdo all other men by being the first to show favour to Hercules with divine honours’, 1.40.2). Evander’s self-promotional aspirations for celebrity undermine any perceived reinforcement of the morality of Hercules’ defeat of Cacus.³⁴

the picture of confusion created by Propertius with regard to the (lack of) moral difference between the two combatants. Janan, *The Politics of Desire*, p. 138, claims further that Propertius’ portrait of Hercules ‘destabilises the clean conceptual antithesis the *Aeneid*’s narrative sketched – civilisation versus barbarism, law versus lawlessness, control versus chaos.’ It is problematic to treat the *Aeneid* in such a (simplistic) way as Virgil’s depiction of Hercules (and Cacus) in the *Aeneid* destabilises these very notions, thereby negating any ‘clean conceptual antithesis’. The *Aeneid*, at best, might be seen to ‘sketch’ a morally dichotomous picture of the protagonists, but its characters are not easily assigned to these antithetical categories – something that Janan, *The Politics of Desire*, n. 9, p. 206, seemingly acknowledges when she refers to the ‘dark voice’ in the *Aeneid*. Furthermore, that Evander has an obvious agenda in his narration of the tale – namely that he is encouraging Aeneas to follow Hercules’ example by confronting Mezentius – further undermines any perceived moral dichotomy.

³⁴ The fact that Dionysius calls the version of the tale involving Evander’s founding of the (proto) Ara Maxima ‘fanciful’ (1.39.1), further erodes any perceived moral support for Hercules’ actions. In fact, in the ‘truer account’ (1.41.1f.), where Dionysius portrays Hercules as an invading general who defeats Cacus and his people (1.42.1f.) – the inhabitants of the area at the time – Evander and some Arcadians are among those who assisted Hercules in his actions (1.42.3). Evander, in this case, then, can hardly be perceived as an impartial judge of the morality of Hercules’ victory.

Livy, too, in his account, offers no unequivocal condonation of Hercules' actions on Evander's behalf, despite, as we have seen, Hercules standing accused of 'open murder' (*manifestae caedis*) by Cacus' fellow shepherds (1.7.9). It is only when – as is the case in Dionysius' account – he learns of Hercules' identity and descent (*ubi nomen patremque ac patriam accepit*, 'when he heard his name, father and birthplace', 1.7.10), and recalls his mother's prophecy (*te mihi mater ... aucturum caelestium numerum cecinit*, 'my mother foretold to me that you would increase the number of the gods', 1.7.10), that he welcomes Hercules (*Ioue nate, Hercules, salve*, 'Hail, Hercules, son of Jove', 1.7.10). Indeed, at no time does Livy have Evander explicitly condone, or even attempt to justify, Hercules' behaviour.

Ovid offers a version of the tale that provides an interesting contrast to the above accounts that all deviate somewhat from what might be considered the 'standard version' offered by Virgil.³⁵ All of the above renderings subvert or downplay the moral significance of Hercules' defeat of Cacus or exclude the conflict altogether and all offer relatively or comparatively favourable characterisations of Cacus. Virgil himself subtly subverts his own presentation (on the surface) of Hercules and Cacus by offering a morally ambiguous characterisation of the combatants, as we have seen. So by way of contrast and in order to assist assessment of the degree of deviation and subversion present in the above accounts, Ovid's account is instructive in that it mirrors the Virgilian version of events but removes all trace of subversion.

In fact, Ovid offers a surprisingly insipid rendering of the tale (*Fasti* 1.543-82) that offers not a hint of ambiguous characterisation or undermining of a stable moral framework. There is no suggestion of Hercules' uncontrollable anger or any hospitable tendencies on Cacus' behalf. The sole diversions or additions to the 'standard version' are that the stolen cattle comprise two bulls (*de numero tauros sentit abesse duos*, '[Hercules] discerns that two bulls are missing from the total', *Fasti* 1.548) and that Hercules inflicts (not without some humour) an additional fourth blow upon Cacus, thereby surpassing the three in the account of Propertius (4.9.15):

³⁵ Although, of course, Ovid's account postdates the other renderings of the tale, it nevertheless provides an interesting and instructive foil.

occupat Alcides, adductaque claua trinodis
 ter quater aduerso sedit in ore uiri. (Fasti 1.575-76)

Alcides is too quick, and the drawn back tri-knotted club
 He sunk thrice, four times, into the man's averted face.

Hercules emerges as a man of principle in Ovid's version – it is for no great gain that he recovers two bulls and one is sacrificed following the recovery (*immolat ex illis taurum tibi, Iuppiter, unum*, 'from those [recovered], he sacrificed one of the bulls to you, Jupiter', *Fasti* 1.579), making a net gain of one. Cacus is presented as the moral antithesis of Hercules – while Hercules piously sacrifices to Jupiter, Cacus is said to live in an impious cave (*impia antra*, *Fasti* 1.562). Indeed, Cacus is accorded the rank of *infamia* ('disgrace', *Fasti* 1.551). There is no trivialisation of the battle itself in *Fasti* – Cacus is a fearsome opponent who tries every trick in his repertoire (*Fasti* 1.569-574) and is only defeated by Hercules' fighting prowess (*Fasti* 1.575-76). The moral justification of Hercules' victory is later confirmed when Thybris (the personified River Tiber), a witness to the events, declares Cacus' punishment deserved (*et tandem Caco debita poena uenit*, 'and at last deserved punishment came to Cacus', *Fasti* 5.648).

The portrayal of Cacus, then, is particularly significant in Propertius 4.9 given the limited references to the actions of Hercules in the account of their conflict. Yet the task of extracting any essential moral difference between the two protagonists is made no easier by the presentation of Cacus that Propertius offers, as his characterisation of Cacus and Hercules is similarly ambiguous.³⁶ Not only within 4.9, where the respective combatants are described and presented in an analogous manner – both are cattle thieves; both are *hospites* – often in ambiguous language, is it impossible to construct any stable moral hierarchy, but allusions to other versions of the tale serve to further trouble any such attempts. With the exception of the *Aeneid* (and to a much lesser extent 4.9),³⁷ in no

³⁶ Janan, *The Politics of Desire*, p. 138, notes the difficulty of extracting any essential difference between Cacus and Hercules in a binary sense.

³⁷ While Propertius assigns three heads to Cacus and thus portrays him as a monster in this regard, the function of the three heads is to allude to the *Aeneid* – where triple Geryon's triple-headedness is stressed – thereby situating Propertius' account of the Hercules/Cacus episode within the thematic framework of

other accounts of the conflict (or lack thereof) examined does Cacus display any hint of monstrosity. Presentations of Cacus range from, at best, an entirely hospitable gentleman who welcomes Hercules to (future) Rome in Diodorus' account to, at worst, a local nuisance in Dionysius' account. Additionally, it is only in Dionysius' account – again, with the exception of the *Aeneid* – that news of Cacus' death is received favourably; and in this case it is only considered to be a piece of good fortune. There is no consentient condemnation of Cacus, nor condonation of Hercules' actions. Indeed, the Cacus that Propertius depicts is something of an amalgamation of various mythical representations, thus negating attempts to construct a singular, definitive or privileged characterisation.³⁸ Propertius' portrayal of Cacus, therefore, is of little assistance in establishing moral distinction between Cacus and Hercules.

Propertius' presentation of Hercules' encounter with Cacus frustrates attempts to establish a stable, morally differential or antithetical pattern of characterisation. Hercules' conflict and subsequent slaying of Cacus is given scant attention and the limited references to his actions are oblique or ambiguous. His defeat of Cacus is – in contrast to the *Aeneid* where Hercules is required to fight valiantly and employ all of his courage and ingenuity to secure success – no hard fought victory achieved through desperate fighting. Nor is it a victory in a moral sense; Hercules recovers – re-steals – the cattle from Cacus, the cattle thief, that he himself stole in the first place from Geryon. The description of Cacus further undermines or downplays Hercules' victory. Cacus offers no resistance or retaliation to Hercules' violent actions and the description of his lair fails to elicit any sense of danger (when compared to the awesome description that Virgil offers, thereby adding considerably to a sense of Cacus' ferocity). Propertius' Cacus is simply not the barbaric monster found in the *Aeneid* – a monster who hangs men's heads on his doorposts and roars like an animal. The relatively favourable depictions of Cacus found in other versions of the Hercules/Cacus tale further undermine or erode any perceived moral victory on Hercules' behalf; as does the lack, or muted nature, of reaction to Cacus' death in Propertius' version and other accounts. Moral ambiguity and lack of

Aeneid. Furthermore, the three heads allude to Augustus' triple triumph – as Geryon's do in the *Aeneid* – and thus confirm Hercules' paradigmatic status in 4.9.

³⁸ Janan, 'Refashioning Hercules', p. 72, notes the conflation of various depictions of Cacus in Propertius' characterisation. She also remarks, *The Politics of Desire*, n. 9, p. 206, that Cacus is not presented in a monolithic fashion.

differentiation or antithesis in the characterisation of Hercules and Cacus are thematically prominent in Propertius' version of the tale and are only heightened by Propertius' allusion to other accounts.

Paradigmatically, the lack of any essential moral difference with regard to Propertius' characterisation of Hercules and Cacus in the dramatisation of their encounter and conflict in 4.9 is significant. The ambiguous presentation of the protagonists, the marked similarities in their characterisation, the lack of narrative concerning the battle between Hercules and Cacus, the oblique description of Cacus' actual death and the lack of any condonation or even reaction to Hercules' victory or Cacus' defeat, collectively negate any attempt to stably locate the combatants and/or their actions within a consistent, antithetical moral framework. Given that Hercules and Cacus are models for Augustus and Antony, respectively, and that their conflict in the *Aeneid* thus constitutes a representation of the battle of Actium, Propertius' presentation of the respective combatants in 4.9 is imbued with political significance.³⁹ Propertius offers a representation of Actium that hinders or even prevents the extraction of any moral difference between the protagonists and refuses to condone, let alone glorify, the actions and conquest of the victor. The significance of the battle itself is downplayed almost to the point of irrelevance given that there is but one line (4.9.15) devoted to the actual physical confrontation – and even this is a rather oblique, after-the-fact description, delivered in the passive voice.⁴⁰ Compare this (vicarious) presentation of the battle of Actium with Suetonius' statement (*Aug.* 17) that the fighting between the respective forces of Augustus and Antony was so protracted that Augustus spent the entire night on his ship. In 4.9, then, there is no celebration of Augustus' Actian victory – there is not the joyous reaction of the inhabitants of proto-Rome or feasting and festivities that follow Hercules' (and thus Augustus') triumph in the *Aeneid* (8.265f.). Allusion to other versions of the tale that offer favourable representations of a de-monstrified Cacus only serve to further undermine attempts to find moral justification for Hercules' actions and

³⁹ Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, p. 172, notes that the conflict between Hercules and Cacus and the lack of narrative of Cacus' death is significant, given the allusion to Actium.

⁴⁰ By way of comparison, the actual physical confrontation between Hercules and Cacus in the *Aeneid* occupies forty-three lines leading up to the death of Cacus (*Aen.* 8.219-261).

to trivialise or tarnish Hercules' victory. Such concerns are thus projected onto the Actian combatants.

Propertius' (veiled) assertion that Augustus' defeat of Antony at Actium was no great moral victory for the *princeps* is not the first occasion that he has made such a claim. Earlier, in his second book, he condemns the human cost on both sides of the conflict and makes it clear that the battle of Actium was a civil war fought by Roman against Roman:

qualem si cuncti cuperent decurrere uitam
 et pressi multo membra iacere mero,
 non ferrum crudele neque esset bellica nauis,
 nec nostra Actiacum uerteret ossa mare,
 nec totiens propriis circum oppugnata triumphis
 lassae foret crinis soluere Roma suos. (2.15.41-46)

If all were desirous to lead such a life [as mine]
 And, overwhelmed by much wine, to lay down their limbs,
 There would be no cruel steel and no ship of war,
 Nor would the Actian Sea turn over our bones,
 Nor so often, assailed all around by her own triumphs,
 Would Rome, exhausted, have loosened her hair.

Not only is Propertius' condemnation of the battle of Actium made clear in this passage, but *nostra ossa* ('our bones', 2.15.44) and the reference to Rome's suffering draws attention to the fact that this was a civil war and thus denounces both of the combatants and their actions – this is no glorious moral victory for Augustus.⁴¹

Propertius' allusion to other accounts of Hercules' conflict with Cacus – accounts that offer a widely divergent range of characterisations of the respective combatants –

⁴¹ That Propertius draws attention to the fact that this is a conflict of Roman against Roman serves to equate rather than differentiate Augustus and Antony. Gurval, R. A., *Actium and Augustus. The Politics and Emotions of Civil War*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 181, notes that the triumph(s) portrayed, here, is more like a funeral procession than a celebration of a victory.

demonstrates and highlights the mutability and malleability of (the Hercules/Cacus) myth.⁴² By drawing attention to the necessarily subjective nature of attempting to privilege a particular version or account, Propertius undermines the credibility of such a process and the promotion of a definitive version. His exposure of the manipulative process of inclusion and exclusion of various mythic threads criticises the construction and promotion of a definitive or privileged version of the events surrounding the battle of Actium and the (moral) characterisation of the combatants in that conflict.

Propertius' treatment of the Hercules/Cacus episode in 4.9 defines the thematic framework of the elegy and thus provides the key to the interpretation of the Bona Dea episode that immediately follows.⁴³ Such thematic concerns as paradigmatic characterisation, the linking of the past with the present, the oppositional presentation and subsequent undermining of binary themes and allusion to other competing or contradictory accounts of actions or events, so prominent in Propertius' portrayal of the Hercules/Cacus episode, also define the Bona Dea episode. Exploration and analysis of these themes assist in unlocking the mysteries of Propertius' account of Hercules' intrusion into the shrine of the Bona Dea.

⁴² As noted by Janan, *The Politics of Desire*, pp. 136-37.

⁴³ Both Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4, who claims that Propertius gives us the story of Hercules and Cacus primarily to introduce the story of Hercules and the Bona Dea and Warden, *Fallax Opus*, p. 108, who calls the Cacus episode in 4.9 a 'dry run for the major episode of the poem', seemingly recognise the thematic relationship between the two distinct episodes. Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in Elegy 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, p. 260, however, states that the Cacus episode is 'summarily dismissed'.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Bona Dea Episode

The Bona Dea episode – the account of a thirsty Hercules’ attempts to gain entry to the grove of Bona Dea in order to drink from the spring within (4.9.21f.) – unlike the preceding tale of Hercules’ encounter with Cacus, is almost without precedent. Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* (1.12.27-28), seemingly citing Varro’s (now lost) account as his source, offers the only other extant narrative and his version can be considered perfunctory at best, contains little detail and is composed some four centuries later.¹ Given the absence of any other accounts of the tale, and thus the opportunity for comparative analysis, there are, accordingly, varied interpretations of this episode and diverse claims regarding its focus.

In summary, following the slaying of Cacus and recovery of his cattle (4.9.1-20), Hercules, struck by a severe thirst (4.9.21), heads off in search of water towards the sound of laughing girls (4.9.23f.) who turn out to be engaged in some form of celebration of the rites of Bona Dea (4.9.25) – rites forbidden to men (4.9.26). Concerned that his terrifying appearance (4.9.45-46) may result in him being refused entry to the spring within the grove where the girls are hidden, he recounts the tale of his time spent in servitude to the Lydian Queen, Omphale, when he dressed (or was dressed) in a woman’s clothes and engaged in women’s work (4.9.47-50). Unmoved by his story, however, the aged priestess of the rites forbids him access (4.9.53f.), whereupon he shoulders the door (and possibly the old woman) aside (4.9.61-2), enters the grove and drains the spring dry

¹ ‘Almost without precedent’, because, presumably, Varro’s account was extant when Propertius composed this elegy. The details or scope of his account, however, are unknown with the exception of what Macrobius tells us. Little is known of Macrobius – most likely he is Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, Vicar of Spain in 399 AD and Proconsul of Africa in 410 AD – see Davies, P. V., *Macrobius: The Saturnalia*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1969, pp. 1-2. Macrobius tells us that Hercules was refused water by a woman when driving Geryon’s cattle through Italy, offering the excuse that it was a day of celebration for the *dea feminarum* (‘Goddess of Women’ – universally accepted to be the same as Bona Dea) and that no man might partake of anything prepared for the goddess. Hercules, in retaliation, banned women from the celebration of his rites.

(4.9.63). Finally, in retaliation for refusing him water, he excludes women from future worship at the Ara Maxima (4.9.67-70).

Hercules' transvestism in this elegy – or, more accurately, his recollection of his previous cross-dressing – and his clearly impious actions in desecrating the female only rites of Bona Dea, together with his subsequent prohibition of women from the celebration of his rites at the Ara Maxima, have rightly been seen as reflective of the elegy's concern with gender and sexual segregation.² There has been of late critical focus on fixed classifications and definitions of gender and the ephemeral or unstable nature of gender identity in regard to the Bona Dea episode in this elegy and its impact upon the concept of *Romanitas* in a wider sense.³ Notions of binarisms (in relation to gender, genre and other concerns), oppositional classification and the limits of such categorisations have also been explored in 4.9 with a particular focus upon the Bona Dea episode.⁴ Alternatively, there has been historical focus on gender and segregation of the sexes with interpretation in terms of sexual segregation of religious institutions and Augustus' (and Livia's) restoration of shrines and religious and moral programmes.⁵ Similarly, this (together with the Hercules/Cacus) episode has been seen as reflecting a Propertian critique of Augustan promotion of definitive or privileged versions of mythology and the mythmaking process in more general terms.⁶ More specifically, there has been focus on the origin and nature of the celebration of rites at the Ara Maxima and

² For a general discussion of Hercules' transvestism in 4.9 with regard to the range of possible contextual readings, see Fox, M., 'Transvestite Hercules at Rome.' in *In/visibility: Gender and Representation in a European Context*. R. Cleminson and M. Allison (Eds.), University of Bradford Press, Bradford, 1988, 1-21.

³ Lindheim, S. H., 'Hercules Cross-Dressed, Hercules Undressed: Unmasking the Construction of the Propertian Amator in Elegy 4.9.' *AJP* 119, 1998, 43-66. Janan, M. W., 'Refashioning Hercules: Propertius 4.9.' *Helios* 25, 1998, 65-77, links the issue with *Romanitas*.

⁴ Debrohun, J. B., 'Redressing Elegy's *Puella*: Propertius IV and the Rhetoric of Fashion.' *JRS* 84, 1994, 41-63. This article is based on her Ph.D. dissertation, 'Hercules Belabored: Propertius 4.9 and the Discourses of Elegy.' University of Michigan, 1992, and appears also in the form of chapter four in Debrohun, J. B., *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003, pp. 156-200. Janan, 'Refashioning Hercules', and chapter eight 'Hercules in Rome' in Janan, M. W., *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, pp. 129-45.

⁵ Fox, M., 'Propertius 4.9 and the Toils of Historicism.' *MD* 43, 1999, 157-76. For Propertius' treatment of the shrine of Bona Dea and the Ara Maxima in 4.9, see Rothwell, K. S., 'Propertius on the Site of Rome.' *Latomus* 55, 1996, 829-54, especially pp. 842f. and Welch, T. S., 'Masculinity and Monuments in Propertius 4.9.' *AJP* 125, 2004, 61-90. Welch's article also appears (largely) in the form of chapter five in Welch, T. S., *The Elegiac Cityscape. Propertius and the Meaning of Roman Monuments*. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2005, pp. 113-32.

⁶ Spencer, D., 'Propertius, Hercules, and the Dynamics of Roman Mythic Space in *Elegy* 4.9.' *Arethusa* 34, 2001, 259-284.

within the cult of Bona Dea.⁷ Issues of genre – notably the juxtaposition and/or incongruity of elegiac and epic themes – have figured prominently in other readings of this episode and the elegy in general.⁸ The intricacies and complexities of this elegy, and this episode in particular, have facilitated many diverse interpretations.

Without discounting the above readings, in this chapter, I propose that just as Hercules serves as a paradigm or model for Augustus in the first episode of this elegy and the treatment of his defeat of Cacus offers an allegorical representation of Augustus' victory over Antony in the battle of Actium, here, too, Hercules functions as an exemplar for Augustus. Further, I suggest that while the Hercules/Cacus episode offers a commentary of Augustan propaganda surrounding Actium, the Bona Dea episode provides a critique of Octavian's transformation into Augustus and his attempts at moral legislation and poetic and sexual censorship.

Unlike the previous episode that has a guide most notably in Virgil's version of the same tale, the lack of precedent for Hercules' encounter with the worshipers of Bona Dea prevents comparison and thus presents difficulties in terms of analysis, yet it is the Hercules/Cacus episode, however, that must serve as guide for interpretation and, indeed, the relationship between the two episodes is advertised by linguistic and thematic connections.⁹

Clearly, the theme of exclusion is prominent in both episodes – Hercules tries to gain entry to both Cacus' cave and the grove of Bona Dea.¹⁰ Yet there are more specific points of contact between the two parts in this elegy. In both the Hercules/Cacus and Bona Dea episodes, Hercules' entry into Cacus' cave and the grove of Bona Dea, respectively, is blocked by barring doors and on each occasion he breaks down these barriers in order to gain access to his cattle in the former case and the spring in the

⁷ Holleman, A. W. J., 'Propertius IV 9: An Augustan View of Roman Religion.' *RBPh* 55, 1977, 79-92.

⁸ Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus: Propertius, IV, 9.' *AJP* 85, 1964, 1-12, was the first to note the elegiac overtones in this elegy such as Hercules' resemblance to the elegiac *exclusus amator*. See also Cairns, F., 'Propertius 4.9: "Hercules Exclusus" and the Dimensions of Genre.' in *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* K. Galinsky (Ed.), P. Lang (Pub.), Frankfurt am Main, 1992, 65-95 and Anderson, W. S., 'The Limits of Genre: A Response to Francis Cairns.' in *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics?* K. Galinsky (Ed.), P. Lang (Pub.), Frankfurt am Main, 1992, 96-103.

⁹ The points of correspondence between the two episodes were first noted in detail by Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus', p. 4.

¹⁰ McParland, E. H., 'Propertius 4.9.' *TAPA* 101, 1970, p. 350, notes the theme of exclusion prominent in both episodes.

latter.¹¹ In the former episode an angry Hercules demolishes Cacus' doors in order to enter the lair:

furis et implacidas diruit ira fores. (4.9.14)

[His] anger smashed down the thief's hostile doors.

Later, when the aged priestess forbids his entry into the grove of Bona Dea, Hercules acts in a remarkably similar way:

... ille umeris postis concussit opacos,
nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim. (4.9.61-62)

... he forced the shady posts with his shoulder;
The closed door bore not his angry thirst.

Reinforcing and highlighting the connection between the two episodes on this occasion is the personification or materialisation of Hercules' anger and his angry thirst (*ira*, 4.9.14 and *irata sitis*, 4.9.62). It is his temper and desire for water, respectively, that are said to break down the doors, not, as one would expect, Hercules himself. Further confirmation of the connection between the two episodes is provided by the echoing *ira* and *irata*.

Providing a specific link between the two episodes, also, is the fact that it is the sounds emanating from inside the places that Hercules seeks to enter that alert him to the contents within.¹² On the first occasion, it is the sound of the lowing cattle inside Cacus' lair (*furem sonuere iuuenci*, 'the cattle cried "thief"', 'the cattle betrayed the thief', 4.9.13) that announce their location, while on the second occasion, Hercules is attracted by the sound of girls' laughter to the presence of those – and thus the potential for a drink – within the grove:

¹¹ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4.

¹² Warden J., 'Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4.9.70f.' *Hermes* 110, 1982, p. 235.

sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,
 lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus. (4.9.23-24)

But elsewhere he hears hidden girls laughing,
 Where a sacred grove had made a wood in a shady ring.

That we are invited to make the connection between Hercules' encounter with Cacus and the worshippers of Bona Dea is reinforced by the linguistic similarities in the respective descriptions of Cacus' cave and the goddess's sacred grove. Cacus is described as the inhabitant of a dreaded abode:

incola Cacus erat, metuendo raptor ab antro. (4.9.9)

Cacus was the resident, a robber from a fearsome cave.

Compare this account of Cacus' lair with the old woman's description to Hercules of the altar hidden within the grove of Bona Dea:

'interdicta uiris metuenda lege piatur
 quae se summota uindicat ara casa.' (4.9.55-56)

'Forbidden to men and hallowed by a fearful law
 Is the altar which protects itself in a secluded hut.'

The repetition of *metuendus* ('to be feared', 4.9.9 and 55) makes explicit the link between the two tales and, furthermore, both Cacus' cave and the grove of Bona Dea are called *antra* ('caves', 'hollows', 4.9.9 and 33, respectively).¹³

On each occasion, too, we are reminded of Hercules' weariness.¹⁴ Upon his arrival at the site of proto-Rome a weary Hercules pastures his (also tired) cattle:

¹³ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4.

¹⁴ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4.

et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues. (4.9.4)

And he settled his weary cattle, himself also weary.

Later, as he tries (in vain) to persuade the *alma sacerdos* ('kindly priestess', 4.9.51) to allow him entry to the grove (and thus water), he laments his fate, remarking upon his tiredness:¹⁵

'angulus hic mundi nunc me mea fata trahentem
accipit: haec fesso uix mihi terra patet.' (4.9.65-66).

'Me dragging my fate, this corner of the world now
Receives: this land scarcely welcomes me [although] weary.'

The connection between the two episodes is forged by the repetition of words – here, *fessos*, *fessus* and *fesso*. Hercules' plea for the shrine to be opened for a weary man (*defessus uir*, 4.9.34) further reinforces the link, with *defessus* recalling *fessus*.¹⁶ Indeed, *trahentem* (4.9.65) provides another allusion to the first part of this elegy with its echo of the description of Cacus' theft of the Hercules' cattle:

auersos cauda traxit in antra boues. (4.9.12)

He dragged the cows backwards by the tail into the cave.

The repetition of *trahere* ('to draw/drag') consolidates the link initially suggested by *fessus*.

¹⁵ He laments his fate and tells of his tiredness when trying to gain entry to the grove if the transposition of lines 65 and 66 (to follow a proposed lacuna at 42) is accepted. The alternative is that these lines follow his draining of the spring in their numbered place. Regardless, he is still described as *fessus* in both episodes. See Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book IV*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, n. 42 and 65-6, pp. 142-43, for a detailed explanation of the textual difficulties, here.

¹⁶ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4.

The notion of hospitality offers further encouragement to the reader to link the two episodes.¹⁷ Cacus is called a *hospes* ('host', 'guest', 'stranger', here, 'host', 4.9.7), suggesting that he offered (or at least was obliged to offer) hospitality to Hercules upon his arrival at proto-Rome. Later, when the priestess of the grove warns Hercules against entering and desecrating the rites performed within, she addresses him with the same title:

'parce oculis, hospes, lucoque abscede uerendo.' (4.9.53)

'Spare your eyes, stranger, and depart this reverend grove.'

A further resonance of *hospes* is evident in Hercules' plea for access to the grove:

'uos precor, o luci sacro quae luditis antro,
pandite defessis hospita fana uiris.' (4.9.33-34)

'I beg you, O you who play in the sacred hollow of the grove,
Open your hospitable shrine to a weary man.'

Hospita, here, echoes *hospes* in lines seven and fifty-three.

Furthermore, there are less obvious links between the two sections in this elegy.¹⁸ For example, the language used of Cacus' doors (*fores*, 4.9.14) and the death of Cacus (*iacuit*, 'he lies dead', 4.9.15) is recalled by the description of Hercules' speech at the entrance to the grove of Bona Dea:¹⁹

¹⁷ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 4.

¹⁸ McParland, p. 351, suggests another connection is evident in the dismissal of the cows following Hercules' conquest of Cacus (*Ite boues*, / *Herculis ite boues*, 'Go cows, / go cows of Hercules', 4.9.16-17) and the subsequent prohibition of women from the Ara Maxima (4.9.69). She notes that the cows are addressed in the feminine, thus reinforcing the link. Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', p. 229, dismisses this connection as implausible. Warden, 'Epic into Elegy', p. 236, further suggests that the purple fillets (*puniceae vittae*, 4.9.27) and the *putris* hut (*casa*, 4.9.28) of the grove of Bona Dea are, perhaps, allusions to the bloody and decaying corpses hung at the entrance to Cacus' cave in the *Aeneid* (8.195-97), thus drawing a link between the Hercules/Cacus and Bona Dea episodes.

¹⁹ Fox, M., *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 173.

et iacit ante fores uerba minora deo.

(4.9.32)

And he hurls before the doors words demeaning a god.

The repetition of *fores* and the (visual and verbal) similarity of *iacuit* and *iacit* forge a link between the two episodes. In fact the words used to describe the destruction of Cacus and his lair are ominously summoned in the depiction of Hercules before the grove.

The numerous thematic and linguistic allusions that link the two distinct parts of this elegy invite and encourage the reader to make connections between the two episodes and, accordingly, while comprising two parts, the elegy must be seen as an integral whole. The remarkable similarities in the descriptions of Hercules' actions in each episode and of Cacus' lair and the grove of Bona Dea cement the thematic relationship between the two tales. The themes, explicit and allegorical, prominent in the Hercules/Cacus episode – discussed in the previous chapter – need to be given prominence also in interpretation of the Bona Dea episode and, accordingly, given the remarkable similarities between the two sections in this elegy, the reader is invited to use the Hercules/Cacus story as guide for analysis of Hercules' encounter with the worshippers of Bona Dea.

If Hercules is presented to the reader as a paradigm for Augustus in the first episode, then, given the strong links between the accounts of his assault upon Cacus' lair and the grove of the goddess, we are encouraged to consider him in such a role in the Bona Dea episode. Projecting his exemplary status from the tale of Cacus to that of Bona Dea offers a privileged (and otherwise overlooked) insight into the complex and at times confusing portrayal of Hercules offered by Propertius in this episode. Failure to recognise the extent of the allegorical relationship between Hercules and Augustus is to miss much of the thrust of the Bona Dea account. Essential also (and closely linked with this relationship) is recognition of the movement of focus from the past to more recent times in contemporary terms in the transition from the former tale to the latter.

The transition of the elegy's focus from the past to the present is reflected in the change from the past to the present tense in descriptions of the actions of Hercules and

events surrounding him. The Hercules/Cacus episode is dominated by past tenses. Hercules drove (*egerat*, 4.9.2) the cattle from Erythea and he came (*uenit*, 4.9.3) to the site of future Rome where he settled (*statuit*, 4.9.4) (the now) his cattle alongside the Tiber (4.9.1-6). The cattle, however, did not stay safe (*non manserunt / incolumes*, 4.9.7-8) and were dragged (*traxit*, 4.9.12) by Cacus into his lair. The cattle betrayed (*sonuere*, 4.9.13) their presence within the cave and Hercules smashed down (*diruit*, 4.9.14) the cave's doors and struck by his club (*pulsus*, 4.9.15), Cacus fell dead (*iacuit*, 4.9.15). The only verb in the present tense in this first episode (*ait*, 'he says', 4.9.16), used to refer to Hercules' address of his rescued cows (4.9.16-20), has no perfect tense (being a defective verb) and although present in form, can be perfect in meaning.²⁰ Verbs in the past tenses, then, overwhelmingly dominate descriptions of Hercules and his encounter with Cacus in this elegy.

The Bona Dea episode begins when Hercules has finished addressing his cattle and is struck by an immense thirst (4.9.21). Fittingly, it is in the first line of this episode that we see the transition from verbs of past tenses to the present. The line begins with the end of Hercules' speech in the past tense (*dixerat*, 'he had spoken') before his thirst overwhelms him in the present tense (*et sicco torquet sitis ora palato*, 'and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth', 4.9.21). The land offers up (*ministrat*, 4.9.22) much water, but elsewhere he hears (*audit*, 4.9.23) the sound of laughing girls, rushes (*ruit*, 4.9.31) towards the sound and upon arrival at the grove's entrance he hurls (*iacit*, 4.9.32) his requests for admittance.²¹ There is a brief return to the past tense when the narrator informs us that he forced (*concussit*, 4.9.61) the door to enter the grove of Bona Dea and subdued (*uicerat*, 4.9.63) his thirst, before a return to the present tense when he lays down (*ponit*, 4.9.64) his laws. From *torquet* in line twenty-one until *concussit* in line sixty-one, Hercules' actions in this episode are described only in the present tense. While the Hercules/Cacus story, then, is composed almost entirely in past tenses, the present tense pervades the Bona Dea episode.

²⁰ *Aio* is used in the imperfect tense, yet the normal forms of the imperfect are metrically incompatible with elegiac couplets. The alternative imperfect forms – which could be made to fit the metre – are never used by Propertius.

²¹ I accept *non nullas* (4.9.22) in preference to *non ullas*. The point is discussed later in this chapter.

In allegorical terms, as we have seen, the battle between Hercules and Cacus represents Octavian's conflict with Antony at the battle of Actium. In describing the battle in past tenses, Propertius consigns the events of Actium to history and at the same time articulates the remoteness of Actium to everyday life in contemporary Rome at the time of the publication of his fourth book some fifteen years after the battle. The predominance of the present tense in the Bona Dea episode enunciates the episode's shift of focus to more recent events. The transition from the past tenses to present signals a change in poetic focus (in allegorical terms) from Octavian's defeat of Antony at Actium in 31 BC and the triple triumph of 29 BC to more recent events in the Bona Dea episode and a focus upon Augustus' actions after gaining sole control of the Roman world.

The change of focus suggested by the movement from the past to present tenses is implied also by the somewhat curious description of Hercules' recovery of his cattle as his *ultimus labor* ('final labour'):

'Herculis ite boues, nostrae labor ultime clauae,
bis mihi quaesitae, bis praeda, boues.' (4.9.17-18)

'Go, cattle of Hercules, final labour of my club,
Cattle twice sought by me, twice my booty.'

In none of the accepted lists of Hercules' labours is his defeat of Geryon and Cacus and the successful theft of the cattle assigned to the final position.²² That the slaying of both Cacus and Geryon is to be included in the *ultimus labor* is indicated by the references in line eighteen to the twin missions to recover the cattle. While it might be argued that *ultimus* (4.9.17), here, be translated as 'latest', or that for Hercules it was, up until this point, his 'last' labour, there is still something odd in calling it *ultimus*.²³ Indeed,

²² Perhaps the two most comprehensive successive lists of Hercules' labours are found in Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.5.1f.) and Diodorus Siculus (4.9.11f.). Both assign the capture of the cattle of Geryon tenth position in the list of twelve labours.

²³ As noted by Holleman, p. 80 and Richardson L. Jr., *Propertius. Elegies I-IV*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977, n. 17, p. 472. Holleman, p. 80, argues further that Hercules would have thought that this was his last labour and that the final two were only imposed upon him later when Eurystheus added them to his burden. This enables some form of temporal coherence or rationalisation to be achieved – and I think that the explanation is plausible – yet it does not diminish the reader's surprise at *ultimus labor*. In

Hercules' journey to the Underworld that he proudly recalls in his speech before the entrance to the grove of Bona Dea creates further temporal confusion:

‘quis facta Herculeae non audit fortia clauae
et numquam ad uastas irrita tela feras,
atque uni Stygias homini luxisse tenebras?’ (4.9.39-41)

‘Who has not heard of the brave deeds of Hercules’ club
And of arrows never shot in vain at huge beasts,
And how the Stygian gloom lit up for one human?’

If the reader's suspicions were aroused by Hercules' (re)capture of the cattle (and the slaying of Cacus) being given the title of *ultimus labor*, the temporal displacement of his successful mission to wrest Cerberus from Hades deepens or even confirms those suspicions. For in order to recall his journey to the dark side during his speech outside the grove, Hercules' journey to the Underworld must, of course, have preceded his present trials, yet lists of his labours place it afterwards, not before.²⁴ Similarly, Hercules recalls in his speech his quest for the apples of Hesperides when he persuaded Atlas to fetch the apples for him while Hercules relieved him of the burden of the globe:

‘audistisne aliquem, tergo qui sustulit orbem?
ille ego sum: Alciden terra recepta uocat.’ (4.9.37-38)

‘You have heard of one who bore the globe on his back?
I am he: the world I carried calls me Alcides.’

Again, however, this particular labour postdates the defeat of Geryon and Cacus, thereby drawing further attention to Hercules' *ultimus labor* (4.9.17). Thus while *ultimus labor*

fact, the need for the not immediately apparent explanation highlights the fact that the reader would have been puzzled by the reference.

²⁴ Staples, A., *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins. Sex and Category in Roman Religion*. Routledge, London, 1998, n. 51, pp. 166-67, notes that Hercules' Underworld adventure, his quest for the apples of Hesperides and his servitude to Omphale all postdate his present trials.

might be explained away by translating as ‘latest’ or some such like when first encountered, the references to Hercules’ journey to the Underworld and the quest for the apples of Hesperides redirect the reader’s attention upon the odd description.

So why does Propertius assign the label *ultimus labor* to Hercules’ defeat of Cacus and the recovery of his cattle and why is the generally accepted order of events so obviously confused? The answer lies in Hercules’ status as an Augustan paradigm.

Following his defeat of Antony (and Antony’s later suicide), Octavian had eliminated his final rival for power in his quest for sole rule of the Roman world. If the exemplary relationship of Hercules and Augustus apparent in the first episode of this elegy is continued, then Hercules’ claim that the recovery of his cattle is his last labour becomes altogether more appropriate and explicable. Hercules’ defeat of Cacus – here, the *ultimus labor* – represents Octavian’s victory over Antony – the *princeps*’ own ‘final labour’ in securing his ascent to power. The fact that the reference to Hercules’ *ultimus labor* occurs in a kind of victory speech immediately following his defeat of Cacus and, allegorically speaking, Octavian’s defeat of Antony, furthers the allusion. Recognising Hercules’ status as a model for Augustus, then, at once assists in interpretation of *ultimus labor* which, in turn, serves to (re)confirm Hercules’ exemplary role.

The change of focus suggested by the movement from the past to present tenses from the Hercules/Cacus to the Bona Dea episodes is thus also intimated by the reference to Hercules’ final labour – one chapter is over and another is expected to begin. Allegorically, then, the focus of the Bona Dea tale is upon the *princeps*’ actions in the years following the battle of Actium – Octavian’s own final obstacle to overcome in attaining sole power.

Immediately following the commemoration of his defeat of Cacus and the recovery of his cattle (4.9.15-20), Hercules is stricken by a torturous thirst (*et sicco torquet sitis ora palato*, ‘and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth’, 4.9.21). It is the onset of this tremendous thirst that triggers a remarkable transformation in the all-conquering Hercules and marks the moment of the elegy’s change of focus.

The transformation of Hercules from epic hero to something akin to the elegiac *exclusus amator* is seen as reflective of the elegy’s juxtaposition of epic and elegiac

themes.²⁵ Hercules' incongruous appearance when the heroic monster-slayer is dressed in ill-fitting women's clothes (4.9.49-50) embodies this enjambment and at the same time invites considerations in terms of gender.²⁶ While on one level the elegy certainly functions in this way, there is more to this transformation than generic or gendered juxtaposition.

When Hercules wonders if his terrifying appearance may prevent him being admitted to the grove of Bona Dea and the spring within, he relates the tale of his time spent as a slave – quite literally in *seruitium amoris* – of the Lydian queen, Omphale, when, remarkably, he dressed as a woman and engaged in women's work:

‘sin aliquem uultusque meus saetaeque leonis
terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma,
idem ego Sidonia feci seruilis palla
officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,
mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus,
et manibus duris apta puella fui.’ (4.9.45-50)

‘But if anyone my appearance and lion's mane
Terrifies and my hair bleached by the Libyan sun,
I, too, in a Sidonian robe, carried out a slave's
Duties and the daily burden upon a Lydian distaff
And a soft bra bound my hairy chest
And I was a proper girl with hard hands.’

In an attempt to soften his image (in order to secure access to the grove), Hercules undergoes a change of appearance – or, more accurately, he recalls a previous change of appearance – and he does so in terms of elegiac poetics.²⁷ *Mollitia* and *duritia* in many

²⁵ See, for example, Debrohun, ‘Redressing Elegy's *Puella*’, pp. 45f.

²⁶ For the embodiment of the juxtaposition of epic and elegiac themes, see Debrohun, ‘Redressing Elegy's *Puella*’, p. 48. For treatments of gender based on Hercules' incongruous appearance, see Lindheim, pp. 44f. and Janan, ‘Refashioning Hercules’, pp. 65f.

²⁷ Debrohun, ‘Redressing Elegy's *Puella*’, p. 48, uses the term ‘softens’ in relation to Hercules' appearance, here, and regards his transformation as part of an alignment with Callimachean poetics.

respects epitomise the relationship between the elegiac *amator* and the object of his affection, the *puella*, and, here, we have the relationship of Hercules and Omphale defined in these very terms. Hercules changes from the heroic, epic warrior (*durus*) to the effeminate, elegiac lover (*mollis*) and in doing so performs what might be seen as a role reversal.²⁸ It has been argued that Hercules fails to complete the transformation from hero to *amator* and that the contrast between his *mollis fascia* ('soft bra', 4.9.49) and his *manus durae* ('hard hands', 4.9.50) symbolises this failure and embodies the incongruity of Hercules' appearance.²⁹ While it is true that *duritia* is an attribute – perhaps even the defining attribute – of the elegiac *puella* and that as long as Hercules is defined in terms of *duritia* he has failed to fully realise his transformation from hero to *amator*, *manus durae*, here, need not be taken to refer (only) to Hercules' hands:

‘mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus,
et manibus duris apta puella fui.’ (4.9.49-50)

‘And a soft bra bound my hairy chest,
And I was a girl created by hard hands.’

If *aptus* is taken in this way, then the hard hands can be those of Omphale and not Hercules.³⁰ Hercules, was, of course, made to wear Omphale's clothing by Omphale, herself, and read in this way, the sense of the line (4.9.50) is something like, ‘I was dressed as a girl by Omphale's hard hands.’³¹ If the line is taken in this way, Hercules does, indeed, complete his transformation; he is typified by *mollitia*, while Omphale is defined in terms of *duritia*. On one hand, then, Hercules completes his metamorphosis

²⁸ Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 49, p. 475, remarks that *mollis*, in this instance, is more applicable to the wearer than the garment.

²⁹ Debrohun, ‘Redressing Elegy's *Puella*’, p. 60, claims that Hercules' hard hands – defined, here, in terms of *duritia*, are not appropriate for the elegiac Hercules as *duritia* is an attribute of the elegiac *puella*, not the *amator*.

³⁰ Debrohun, ‘Redressing Elegy's *Puella*’, p. 49, note this usage of *aptus* as a suitable translation but still attributes the harshness of hand to Hercules. The sense of the line would then be something like, ‘I was dressed as a girl although my hands were hard’.

³¹ For the affair between Hercules and Omphale, see Propertius 3.11.17-20, Ovid, *Fasti* 2.303f. and *Her.* 9.53f.

from hero to *amator*, yet on the other – attributing the hard hands to Hercules – he fails to fully realise the transformation.

Given Hercules' exemplary status, Propertius' portrayal of Hercules, here, may be making light of Augustus' rumoured effeminacy – Sextus Pompey had made such accusations (Suet. *Aug.* 68)³² – more importantly, however, Hercules' change of image reflects the *princeps*' own transformation in the years following his victory at Actium.³³ Octavian, the wager of civil wars, slayer of Roman citizens and ruthless warlord, underwent a remarkable metamorphosis in the period following his Actian triumph and ascent to sole rule to emerge as Augustus, overseer of morals, author of the *pax Augusta*, closer of the doors of the temple of Janus – interestingly, Propertius, perhaps in critique of Augustan propaganda, portrays Hercules (and, vicariously, Augustus) in this elegy as an opener, not a closer, of doors – and *pater patriae*.³⁴ Keen to legitimise his controversial constitutional position and to leave the days of the bitter civil wars behind him, Augustus strove to create a new image for himself befitting his new role and status. Although there is a discernible change in iconography such as statuary and coinage – Augustus, himself, tells us that following his Actian victory he removed eighty statues of himself from Rome (*RG* 24), presumably as part of the reinvention of his image – Augustus, like Hercules, could never fully obscure his former self and the *princeps* would forever be tainted by his involvement in the bitter civil wars that secured his rise to power.³⁵

³² While the accusations are unconvincing and clearly politically motivated, the rumours existed nonetheless.

³³ Spencer, p. 272, states that 'like Octavian/Augustus, Hercules is undergoing a metamorphosis, shedding some of his past associations and emerging remodelled.' She is, however, not comparing the change that Hercules undergoes in 4.9 with Octavian's change to Augustus, but the transformation of Hercules from ostensibly a Greek god to 'an archetype for Roman imperial power' during the time of Octavian/Augustus' reign.

³⁴ Although Augustus was not granted the title *pater patriae* until 2 BC, some fourteen years after the likely publication of Propertius' fourth book, Augustus' transformation was well underway by 16 BC. His adoption of the title *pater patriae* marks the culmination of his metamorphosis.

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of Augustan iconography before and after Actium and the process of image reinvention, see Zanker, P., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1988, pp. 33f. For the reinvention of his image and the need for such a reinvention, see Galinsky, K., *Augustan Culture*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, pp. 82f. For a chronological survey of literature and iconography throughout the rule of Augustus, see 'From Triumvirate to Principate.' (Section H) in *The Age of Augustus*. M. G. L. Cooley (Ed.), *Lactor* 17, London Association of Classical Teachers, London, 2003, pp. 180-202.

A critical, if not the defining, moment in the *princeps*' (attempted) transformation of image was not visual, however, but verbal. Born C. Octavius and adopted by Julius Caesar under the name Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, Octavian, following his Actian victory and after attending to several matters in the eastern provinces, returned to Rome and entered in triple-triumph (29 BC), 'restored' the Republic and was given the honorific title 'Augustus' (27 BC) (RG 34). The titular change from Octavian to Augustus – the title bestowed upon him by the senate and the Roman people – is echoed in 4.9 by the name changes experienced by Hercules. In the elegy's grand opening, Hercules is referred to by his patronymic title, Amphytrioniades (4.9.1); in the remainder of 4.9, he is called, variously, Alcides (4.9.16, 38 and 51), Sancus (4.9.72) and, of course, Hercules (4.9.17, 39 and 70). Interestingly, it is only after his defeat of Cacus and recovery of his cattle that Hercules undergoes his (first) titular transformation from Amphytrioniades to Alcides (4.9.16). Given that his defeat of Cacus represents Octavian's Actian triumph, the timing of the change of title coincides with Octavian's own change of name.

Hercules (and his counterpart, Augustus), then, performs his *ultimus labor*, softens his image and undergoes a change of title. Yet why is Hercules so keen to gain entry to the grove of Bona Dea and to drink from the spring within when there is no shortage of water closer at hand?

Following the recovery of his cattle and quaintly bucolic speech to the recovered herd, a thirst-stricken Hercules is overcome by desire for water. Oddly, however, he seemingly ignores the abundance of water in his immediate surrounds:

dixerat, et sicco torquet sitis ora palato,
terraque non nullas feta ministrat aquas. (4.9.21-22)

He spoke, and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth,
And the teeming earth offers no little water.

Instead, he is alerted/distracted by the sound of laughing girls some way off in the distance and decides to head in that direction in search of a drink:

sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,
 lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus. (4.9.23-24)

But elsewhere he hears hidden girls laughing,
 Where a sacred grove had made a wood in a shady ring.

Indeed, he is in quite a hurry to reach the grove:

huc ruit in siccam congesta puluere barbam. (4.9.31)

He rushes here with dust caked upon his dry beard.

Hercules, then, ignores the plentiful supply of water at his disposal and, instead, heads off in search of the girls.

Critical to understanding Hercules' actions in this instance and the importance of his abrupt change of focus from the need for water to the sound of the laughing girls is to read *non nullas aquas* ('no little water', 'not insubstantial sources of water', 4.9.22). Despite the fact, however, that all of the superior manuscripts have *non nullas* at line twenty-two, the great majority of editors, critics and commentators persist in reading the inferior *non ullas* (or some other emendation).³⁶ This, of course, results in a rather different interpretation of the passage; if *non ullas* is accepted, then Hercules, stricken by

³⁶ Reading *non ullas* are Anderson, W. S., 'Hercules Exclusus', p. 5, Butler, H. E., *Sexti Properti Opera Omnia*. Archibald Constable and Co., London, 1905, p. 118 and n. 22, p. 386, Butler, H. E. and Barber, E. A., *The Elegies of Propertius*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1933, p. 143 and n. 22, p. 372, Cairns, p. 68, Camps, *Book IV*, p. 37 and n. 22, p. 138, Enk, P. J., *Ad Propertii Carmina Commentarius Criticus*. Garland, New York, 1978, n. 22, p. 343, Hertzberg, G. A. B., *Sex. Aurelii Propertii Elegiarum Libri Quattuor*. I. F. Lipperti (Pub.), Halis, 1843, p. 156 and n. 22, p. 488, Goold, G. P., *Propertius. Elegies*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1990, p. 428, Paley, F. A., *Propertii Carmina*. Bell and Daldy, London, 1872, p. 270, Rothwell, p. 849, Staples, p. 24 and Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', p. 74. Reading *non nullas* are Fox, *Roman Historical Myths*, p. 173, Lee, p. 124 and n. 22, p. 196 and Richardson, *Propertius*, p. 139 and n. 22, p. 473. Reading *non [n]ullas* are Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 134-35 (who, despite printing *[n]ullas*, clearly reads *ullas*, although she does acknowledge (p. 209) that Hercules seems to have ignored other potential sources of water such as the Velabrum and the Tiber) and Fedeli, P., *Sexti Properti Elegiarum Liber IV*. B. G. Teubner (Pub.), Stuttgart, 1994, p. 267. Richmond, O. L., *Sexti Properti Quae Supersunt Opera*. Cambridge University Press, London, 1928, p. 375, reads *non uiuas aquas*. Note that Richmond considers this elegy to be the tenth in the fourth book. *Non ullas* appears only in inferior manuscripts. For a discussion of the manuscript tradition, see Richardson, *Propertius*, pp. 16-22.

thirst and unable to find water, understandably heads towards the sound of people and thus the likelihood of a drink:

dixerat, et sicco torquet sitis ora palato,
terraque non ullas feta ministrat aquas. (4.9.21-22)

He spoke, and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth,
And the earth [although] teeming offers no water.

Yet to accept *non ullas* is to misinterpret the passage. Indeed, that the earth should now offer up no sources of water for Hercules is rather bemusing given the description of the scene provided by the elegy's opening, where we find a well-watered landscape:

et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues,
qua Velabra suo stagnabant flumine quoque
nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas. (4.9.4-6)

And he settled his weary cattle, himself also weary,
Where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow and where
The sailor used to glide through urban waters.

Clearly, here, the Velabrum, an area prone to flooding in Rome's early days and providing sailing opportunities, offers plenty of water for a thirsty Hercules.³⁷ In fact, earlier in book four, Vertumnus, from his vantage point near the Velabrum, also recalls the Tiber's propensity for flooding in this area and remembers the boats upon its waters:

hac quondam Tiberinus iter faciebat, et aiunt
remorum auditos per uada pulsa sonos. (4.2.7-8)

³⁷ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 11, notes the incongruity of Hercules being unable to find water and the description of the aquatic landscape in the elegy's opening sentence. See Propertius 4.2.7-8, Ovid, *Fasti* 6.405-08 and Tibullus 2.5.33-34, for the Tiber's flooding of the Velabrum. It was later drained by the construction of the *cloaca Maxima*, see Claridge, A., *Rome. An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 62.

Once, the Tiber made its journey this way, and they say
The sound of oars was heard striking the shallows.

Given the abundance of water in the surrounding area, then, to describe the earth as *feta* ('teeming', 4.9.22) yet affording no water seems absurd and, indeed, explanations of this incongruous mixture of aquatic abundance and aridity are forced or even contrived. Some who read *non ullas aquas* argue that *feta terra* must therefore refer to terrain full of underground water yet devoid of any on the surface; water that provides pasture for Hercules' cattle by virtue of nourishing the grass, but fails to appear above ground.³⁸ Others claim that 'the landscape is aquatically fickle'³⁹ and that 'for some inexplicable reason, the fertile earth affords no water'.⁴⁰ Emending *nullas* to *ullas*, pushes the text toward the point of alogy and, indeed, overlooks (or even destroys) the invitation for the reader to consider more closely Hercules' peculiar disregard for the waters in his immediate surrounds given the extent of his thirst.

The fact that Hercules chooses to ignore the opportunity to quench his thirst at first avail – reading *non nullas aquas* – suggests that his desire for the water within the grove overrides any pressing need to assuage his thirst and/or that it is not actual or literal thirst that compels Hercules to approach the grove of Bona Dea and request water – in fact, he does not simply ask the priestess for a drink which could, perhaps, be brought out for him – but rather access to the grove and the spring within that is his real interest. *Non ullas aquas*, on the other hand, implies that it is, indeed, Hercules' desire for water (in the literal rather than metaphorical sense) that drives him toward the sound of the girls' laughter and causes him to seek access to the grove. Correctly interpreting the nature of Hercules' thirst and of the water to which he seeks access is crucial to understanding his actions (and, allegorically, those of the *princeps*) in this episode.

The importance of water in this episode (and this elegy in general) is made explicit by the many references to water (or lack thereof) found throughout the elegy. Hercules settles his cattle at the Velabrum, where once the river formed a lake (*qua*

³⁸ Butler, n. 22, p. 386; Butler and Barber, n. 22, p. 372; Paley, n. 22, p. 270.

³⁹ Welch, 'Masculinity and Monuments', p. 74

⁴⁰ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 5.

Velabra suo stagnabant flumine, ‘where the Velabrum used to pool with its own flow’, 4.9.5) and boats were sailed (*quoque / nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas*, ‘and where / the sailor used to glide through urban waters’, 4.9.5-6). The language evokes a particularly aquatic setting. Following the recapture of his cattle, a parched Hercules is stricken by thirst (*et sicco torquet sitis ora palato*, ‘and with dry palate thirst tortures his mouth’, 4.9.21), despite the abundance of water nearby (*terraque non nullas feta ministrat aquas*, ‘and the teeming earth offered no little water’, 4.9.22). The grove of Bona Dea contains a reverend spring (*fontisque piandos*, ‘a spring to be treated piously’, 4.9.25) and Hercules, professedly lacking water (*fontis egens erro*, ‘I wander lacking a spring’, 4.9.35), hears the sound of its waters (*circaque sonantia lymphis*, ‘around is the sound of water’, 4.9.35) and requests a handful to drink (*caua succepto flumine palma sat est*, ‘a cupped palm caught from the stream is enough’, 4.9.36). Even his divine nemesis, Juno, he says, would not begrudge him a drink (*non clausisset aquas ipsa nouerca suas*, ‘my very stepmother would not have closed her waters’, 4.9.44). The priestess’s cautionary advice to Hercules when refusing him access to the grove makes specific mention of water also. Tiresias suffered much – he was made blind – she says, when he saw Minerva bathing (*magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada uates, / fortia dum ... membra lauat*, ‘at great cost did the seer, Tiresias, look upon Pallas, / while she bathed her brave limbs’, 4.9.58). He must seek another spring, she tells him, because these waters are for girls alone (*di tibi dent alios fontis: haec lympa puellis / auia secreti limitis una fluit*, ‘may the gods grant you other springs: for girls alone does this water, set apart with secret channel, flow’, 4.9.59-60). Ignoring her warnings, Hercules, unable to control his thirst any longer (*nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim*, ‘the closed door bore not his angry thirst’, 4.9.62), drains the spring (*exhausto flumine*, ‘with the stream drained’, 4.9.63), and forbids women worship at the Ara Maxima, lest his thirst be unavenged (*ne sit inulta sitis*, 4.9.70). Water figures prominently in this elegy and in this episode in particular, with the vast majority of aquatic terms and references to watery places or thirst occurring (as one would expect given the narrative plot) in the Bona Dea episode.

If we read *non nullas aquas* (as we must), and thus conclude that Hercules’ desire for water – given that he chooses to ignore the many sources of water available to him in spite of his torturous thirst – is metaphorical rather than literal, or at the very least that his

desire for the water in the grove of Bona Dea outweighs the need for the immediate slaking of his thirst, what is the nature of this thirst and of water within this episode (and elegy)?

It has been suggested that the real source of Hercules' desire is the girls, themselves, hidden within the grove.⁴¹ The similarity of his actions and speech to that of the *exclusus amator* delivering his paraclausithyron clearly suggests an erotic context and, indeed, his *sitis* ('thirst', 4.9.21, 62 and 70), in such a context, might well be interpreted as erotic desire.⁴² Furthermore, when he does finally manage to gain entry to the grove, the draining of the spring is said to conquer his heat (*uicerat aestum*, 4.9.63) – *aestus* is also used to indicate desire in erotic vocabulary.⁴³ There is much to commend in such reasoning and certainly the erotic context provides a strong subtext within the elegy and in this episode especially. Yet when Hercules bursts into the grove, the object of his desire is not the girls within – in fact no mention is made of those within the grove once Hercules has made his entry – but the water source itself, which he then proceeds to drink dry (4.9.63).⁴⁴ So despite the erotic context, the real object of his desire remains the water itself and not the girls.

Given that water is the object of Hercules' desire, yet he ignores the water around him in favour of that within the grove of Bona Dea, this must be no ordinary water and, indeed, it is not. Here, water must (as it often does) represent poetic inspiration and/or poetic genre and even poetry itself.⁴⁵ There are several indicators that point towards this conclusion.

Water functions as a source of poetic inspiration or represents poetry in other elegies throughout the Propertian corpus. The tenth elegy in the second book is a good case in point. Propertius professes his readiness to write of more serious themes (than

⁴¹ The first to make such a claim was Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 12.

⁴² Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 12.

⁴³ Anderson, W. S., '*Hercules Exclusus*', p. 12. Anderson, here, provides examples of both *sitis* and *aestus* in erotic contexts.

⁴⁴ Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, p. 139, claims that 'somewhat unexpectedly, however, he [Hercules] does not go after the *puellae*' when he enters the grove.

⁴⁵ The lengthiest treatment of the poetics of water in this elegy is found in Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 201-09 – chapter titled 'Excursus'. For a synopsis of the association of various water sources with their corresponding poetic genres (offered as part of a discussion on Propertius 2.10), see Tatum, W. J., 'Aspirations and Divagations: The Poetics of Place in Propertius 2.10.' *TAPA* 130, 2000, 393-410.

erotic love) and does so by describing his poetics in terms of the geography of Mt. Helicon:

sed tempus lustrare aliis Helicon choreis
 et campum Haemonio iam dare tempus equo.
 iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas
 et Romana mei dicere castra ducis. (2.10.1-4)

But it is time to circle Helicon with other dances,
 And time to give the Haemonian horse the plain.
 Now I want to mention squadrons brave in battle
 And to tell of my leader's Roman camp(aign)s.

Despite his claims of a willingness to write of battles and other epic themes, Propertius eventually pleads an inability to do justice to such themes and he does so with reference to the aquatic geology/geography of Mt. Helicon's waterways:

nondum etiam Ascræos norunt mea carmina fontis,
 sed modo Permessi flumine lauit Amor. (2.10.25-26)

Not yet do my songs know the Ascræan springs,
 But Love has just dipped them in Permessus' stream.⁴⁶

His poetry, he claims, is ignorant of the upstream fount, the Ascræan springs – the fount of epic (or at least hexametric) poetry;⁴⁷ the lofty status of epic represented, here, it

⁴⁶ Ambiguity is created by *modo* (2.10.26), here, and the potential translations ('recently', 'only', 'just now') impact upon, and are influenced by, interpretation of the couplet in terms of the strength of Propertius' *recusatio*. See Berry, M. J., 'Propertian Ambiguity and the Elegiac Alibi.' in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XII. Latomus Collection* 287, C. Deroux (Ed.), Brussels, 2005, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁷ The couplet contains allusion to Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.64-73, where Virgil equates Gallus' elegiac poetry with the River Permessus and *Georgics* 2.175-76, where he seemingly associates his *Georgics* with the Ascræan springs. Although today we do not consider all hexametric poetry to be 'epic' and recognise other genres of hexametric verse, the ancients made no such distinction. Nonetheless, verse written in hexameters represents a higher form of poetry than that composed in elegiac couplets.

seems, by the spring being located some way up towards the summit of Mt. Helicon, in contrast to Propertius' hitherto (thematically) elegiac poetry that languishes in the lowland River Permessus – the lowly waters of elegy.⁴⁸ That this is the generic poetics/geography of Mt. Helicon is suggested by the previous sentence:

ut, caput in magnis ubi non est tangere signis,
 ponitur his imos ante corona pedes,
 sic nos nunc, inopes laudis conscendere currum,
 pauperibus sacris uilia tura damus.⁴⁹ (2.10.21-24)

As, when it is not possible to touch the head on great statues,
 A garland is placed before the feet at the very base,
 So I now, powerless to mount the chariot of praise,
 Offer cheap incense in a poor man's sacrifice.

Just as he is unable to reach the lofty heights of the Ascræan springs with his poetry, so too is he unable to reach to the top of a tall statue. Like the lowly waters of elegy where his poetry languishes, he can only make offerings at the very base of a statue.

Mt. Helicon and its watery topography figure prominently in another of Propertius' elegies and, again, the waters represent poetry and its genres:

uisus eram molli recubans Heliconis in umbra,
 Bellorophonteï qua fluit umor equi,
 reges, Alba, tuos et regum facta tuorum,
 tantum operis, neruis hiscere posse meis;
 paruaque tam magnis admoram fontibus ora,
 unde pater sitiens Ennius ante bibit

⁴⁸ Propertius' poetry is, of course, entirely elegiac if judged in terms of metre. The distinction made, here, is thematically based. For a detailed discussion of the aquatic geology/geography of 2.10, see Tatum, pp. 393f. Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 25-26, p. 244, offers a concise treatment of the aquatic/poetic landscape.

⁴⁹ I accept the conjectured *his* for *hac* (2.10.22) and *currum* for *carmen* (2.10.23) of the better manuscripts (although I find neither emendation particularly satisfactory). It has no bearing, however, on the argument offered here. For the problems, see Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book II*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, n. 22 and 23, p. 111 and Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 22 and 23, pp. 243-44.

et cecinit Curios fratres et Horatia pila ... (3.3.1-7)

I had seen myself reclining in Helicon's soft shade,
 Where the rill of Bellerophon's horse flows,
 And your kings and your kings' deeds, Alba,
 I was able to mouth – such a task – with my powers;
 And I had put my puny lips to the great spring,
 Whence thirsty father Ennius once drank
 And sang of Curian brothers and Horatian javelins ...

The water imagery is continued when Phoebus appears (3.3.12) and rebukes Propertius for his lofty thoughts:

'quid tibi cum tali, demens, est flumine? quis te
 carminis heroi tangere iussit opus?' (3.3.15-16)

'What right have you, madman, to such a stream? Who
 Ordered you to touch the task of heroic verse?'

Again, water represents poetry and poetic inspiration and, in this particular example, the genre is epic (*carmen heroum*).

Phoebus then instructs Propertius to follow a new path (3.3.25-26) – literally and metaphorically – to a grotto that reminds of the grove of Bona Dea in 4.9:⁵⁰

hic erat affixis uiridis spelunca lapillis,
 pendebantque cauis tympana pumicibus,
 orgia Musarum et Sileni patris imago
 fictilis et calami, Pan Tegeaeae, tui;
 et Veneris dominae uolucres, mea turba, columbae

⁵⁰ The new path (*noua ... semita*, 3.3.26), apparently unseen by Propertius, corresponds with the water off the beaten path (*lympa .../ auia*, 4.9.60-61).

tingunt Gorgoneo punica rostra lacu;
 diuersaeque nouem sortitae iura puellae,
 exercent teneras in sua dona manus. (3.3.27-34)

Here was a verdant grotto embellished with mosaics,
 And hanging from the vaulted tufa were tambourines,
 Instruments of the Muses and an image of father Silenus
 In clay and your reed pipes, Tegean Pan;
 And Lady Venus' birds, my crowd, doves,
 Dip red beaks in the Gorgonean pool;
 And a mix of girls allotted nine realms
 Busy tender hands on their own gifts.

The suitable setting that Phoebus directs Propertius to – a place befitting his style of elegiac poetry – shares a number of characteristics with the grove of Bona Dea. Both are called grottos (*spelunca*, 3.3.27; *antrum*, 4.9.33) and both are seemingly covered by verdant greenery (*uiridis*, 3.3.27; *lucus*, 'grove', 4.9.24; *nemus*, 'wood', 4.9.24; *populus et longis ornabat frondibus aedem*, 'poplar adorned the shrine with its long foliage', 4.9.29). The tambourines hanging (*pendebant*, 3.3.28) from the roof recall the purple fillets covering (*uelabant*, 4.9.27) (and presumably hanging over) the threshold; the colour of the fillets (*puniceae uittae*, 'red fillets', 4.9.27) echoed by the hue of the birds' beaks (*punica rostra*, 'red beaks', 3.3.32). Indeed, the presence of birds is a feature of both settings; doves inhabit the one grotto (3.3.31-32), while (unnamed) birds sing in the other (*multaque cantantis umbra tegebat auis*, 'and much shade covered singing birds', 4.9.30). The Gorgonean pool that the birds dip their beaks into (3.3.32) is echoed in the cautionary tale told to Hercules by the aged priestess of Tiresias spying upon a bathing Minerva (*magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada uates, / fortia dum posita Gorgone membra lauat*, 'at great cost did the seer, Tiresias, look upon Pallas, while she bathed her brave limbs with the Gorgon set aside', 4.9.57-58).⁵¹ The most telling correspondence, however, between the two settings is the presence within both grottos of *puellae* (3.3.33;

⁵¹ The echo of *Gorgoneo* contained in *Gorgone* is noted by Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, p. 203.

4.9.23) and in 3.3, one of these girls/muses, Calliope, then commands Propertius to write elegiac poetry and not epic (3.3.39-50) and draws water from a spring inside the grotto and offers it to Propertius (*talia Calliope, lymphisque a fonte petitis / ora Philetea nostra rigauit aqua*, ‘Thus Calliope spoke, and drawing water from the spring, she wet my lips with water of Philetas’, 3.3.51-52).⁵² So, here, the spring within the grove, represents elegiac poetry and the grove and the fount bear a strong resemblance to the grove and fount of Bona Dea.⁵³

The cautionary tale of Tiresias’ blinding by Minerva, delivered to Hercules by the old woman who guards the grove of Bona Dea (4.9.58), provides another clue to the poetic nature of the spring within the grove. The tale of Tiresias’ blunder and blinding is told by Callimachus (*Hymn* 5.68f.). Tiresias, stricken by an unspeakable thirst (διψάσας δ' ἄφατόν, 5.77) happened upon a spring where he saw Minerva bathing – a sight that was forbidden to him – and was, accordingly, blinded by the angry goddess (5.68-82). Clearly, Hercules’ actions in 4.9 when afflicted by a huge thirst he arrives at a spring that he is forbidden to access – a spring belonging to a goddess – whereupon he is offered the cautionary tale of Tiresias’ blinding, suggests a strong link with Callimachus’ tale.⁵⁴ Indeed, Propertius declares himself the Roman Callimachus in the programmatic opening of his final book (4.1.64). But what is most important from our perspective is the setting of Tiresias’ blinding and Minerva’s bathing – the Fount of the Horse on Mt. Helicon, or the Hippocrene, (5.71); the same spring where Propertius dreamed of turning his hand to loftier poetry (*Bellorophonte qua fluit umor equi*, 3.3.2). The fact that the scene of Tiresias’ blinding, the tale of which the aged priestess offers in warning, is a famous fount of poetic inspiration suggests that the spring that Hercules seeks in the grove of Bona Dea is also a poetic fount.⁵⁵

⁵² Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, p. 207, notes the similarity of the *puellae* in 3.3 and 4.9.

⁵³ The similarity of the respective springs is remarked upon by Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, p. 207. Debrohun, however, is more concerned with the alignment of Propertius’ poetry with the principles of Callimachean poetics, than the similarities between the two grottos in 3.3 and 4.9 – see Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 201f.

⁵⁴ Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 203-04, notes that in Propertius 4.9 and Callimachus, *Hymn* 5, both Hercules and Tiresias are thirsty, both places are holy, both men look upon what they should not and blinding (actual or threatened) occurs in both tales.

⁵⁵ See Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 202f.

The opening elegy of Propertius' third book offers further confirmation of the poetic nature of the spring and grove that Hercules seeks to access in 4.9:

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,
 in uestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.
 primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos
 Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.
 dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro?
 quoue pede ingressi? quamue bibistis aquam? (3.1.1-6)

Shade of Callimachus and sacrifices of Coan Philetas,
 Into your grove, I pray, allow me to come.
 I enter first as a priest of a pure spring
 To offer Italian mysteries in Greek dances.
 Tell me, in what grotto did you both refine your song?
 With what foot did you enter? What water did you drink?

Here we have, once more, a spring within a grove representing poetry and poetic inspiration. Indeed, this grove is unmistakably representative of poetry given that it is the domain of two famous poets – elegiac poets – and further enhancing its poetic nature are the references to metre – Greek rhythms (*Graios choros*, 3.1.4) and (metrical) feet (*pede*, 3.1.6).⁵⁶

One of the strongest indicators that we are to see the spring within the grove of Bona Dea as a source of poetic water is found in Propertius' fourth book. When preparing to tell of the origin of the temple of Palatine Apollo and the battle of Actium, Propertius seeks to write in the style of Philetas and Callimachus (just as he did in 3.1):

sacra facit uates: sint ora fauentia sacris,
 et cadat ante meos icta iuuenca focus.

⁵⁶ Camps, W. A., *Propertius. Elegies Book III*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966, notes the allusion to metre contained in *pes* (3.1.6).

cera Philiteis certet Romana corymbis,
et Cyrenaeas urna ministret aquas.⁵⁷ (4.6.1-4)

The poet makes sacrifices: may mouths favour the sacrifices
And a stricken heifer fall before my altar.
Let Roman wax compete with Philetas' ivy-clusters
And the urn offer Cyrenean waters.

Propertius, here, hopes to match the quality and style of his predecessors and in referring to Callimachus (4.6.4) – Callimachus was from Cyrene – he defines his inspiration, again, in terms of water. Most important from our perspective, however, is the allusion to Propertius 4.9; compare the Cyrenean waters, above, to the water offered by the earth when Hercules is struck by his torturous thirst:

terraque non nullas feta ministrat aquas. (4.9.22)

And the teeming earth offers no little water.

What is remarkable, here, is the strikingly similar *ministret aquas* (4.6.4) and *ministrat aquas* (4.9.22). Furthermore, these are the only occurrences of *ministrare* in Propertius' final book. Clearly, with such strong allusion, the latter phrase is intended to recall the former. When the Bona Dea episode begins, then, and Hercules seeks water, it is clear from this allusion that the water he seeks is the water of poetic inspiration and/or poetry.

In all of the cases mentioned above, water and groves represent poetry, poetic genre and inspiration. The many similarities, allusions and points of reference between these examples and the presentation of the grove and spring of Bona Dea and Hercules' actions in 4.9 confirm the poetic nature of the fount that Hercules drains when he bursts into the grove. Moreover, it is evident that the poetic genre that the water within the grove represents is elegy and this is made clear not only by allusion to other such groves

⁵⁷ I see no reason to accept Scaliger's conjectured *serta* ('wreath', 4.6.3) despite its obvious merits, given that the manuscripts' *cera* makes adequate sense and provides for neat alliteration – see Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 3, p. 447.

and springs, but also by the context of Hercules' actions in the Bona Dea episode and the nature of the grove and those within.⁵⁸

The grove of Bona Dea, itself, is also no ordinary grove; indeed, here, the goddess's grove is representative of the private realm – an individual or family's private, personal space within the greater public expanse of Rome; the domain of the *paterfamilias* rather than the *pater patriae*, if you like. There are several indicators that point towards such a conclusion.

The initial description of the grove makes it clear that it is separated from the outside world by a *limen* ('threshold', 'doorway', 'entrance'):

deuia puniceae uelabant limina uittae. (4.9.27)

Purple fillets were covering the secluded threshold.

Again, when the aged priestess warns Hercules to leave the grove, the entrance is described as a *limen*:

'parce oculis, hospes, lucoque abscede uerendo;
cede agedum et tuta limina linque fuga.' (4.9.53-54)

'Spare your eyes, stranger, and depart this reverend grove;
Go at once and leave the threshold in safe flight.'

The *limen*, here, not only separates the *exclusus amator* from the object of his desire on the other side of the threshold – its usual elegiac function – it also demarcates public from private space.⁵⁹ In fact, the private or restricted nature of the grove is made explicit on a number of occasions from the very outset. Indeed, the initial description of the grove announces its exclusive status:

⁵⁸ For the elegiac stature of Hercules and the grove of Bona Dea, see Anderson, W. S. '*Hercules Exclusus*', pp. 1-12. In fact, the water that Hercules refuses – the water of the Tiber and the Velabrum – can be seen as representative of epic poetry, given that this water(s) features in what is the epic part of the elegy.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of the role of the *limen* in love elegy, see Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, pp. 127f.

sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,
 lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus,
 femineae loca clausa deae fontisque piandos. (4.9.23-25)

But elsewhere he hears the sound of hidden girls laughing,
 Where a sacred grove had made a wood in a shady ring,
 An enclosed place of the female goddess and a reverend spring.

Those within the grove are shut away (*inclusas*, 4.9.23) from view and the enclosed (*clausa*, 4.9.25) nature of the grove is made clear. The proximity of *inclusas* and *clausa* (in the same sentence) stresses the seclusion. Furthermore, the *limen*, itself, is said to be *deuium* ('secluded', 'remote', 4.9.27). Further emphasising its private status is the fact that, despite being a natural grove (4.9.24), it is furnished with doors, as is evident from Hercules' pleas for entry before the grove's entrance:

et iacit ante fores uerba minora deo. (4.9.32)

And he hurls before the doors words demeaning a god.

Indeed, Hercules has to force his way through these doors in order to enter the grove and access the spring within:

... ille umeris postis concussit opacos,
 nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim. (4.9.61-62)

... he forced the shady posts with his shoulder;
 The closed door bore not his angry thirst.

The grove and its contents, then, are hidden behind closed doors and shut off from the outside world.

Furthermore, not only does the *limen*, by representing or even defining the trials and experiences of the elegiac lover, advertise the grove's elegiac context, it designates the space within the grove as a particular kind of private domain.⁶⁰ In the world of elegy, this is the private domain of erotic love. More specifically, however, the *limen* of Propertius' elegies signifies in this erotic world the boundary between fidelity and infidelity, faithfulness and promiscuity and appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour.⁶¹ When Cynthia plans to go abroad with her new lover, despite considering her a traitress or oath-breaker (*periura*, 1.8.17), Propertius professes that he will remain faithful in the face of her infidelity:

nam me non ullae poterunt corrumpere, de te
quin ego, uita, tuo limine uera querar. (1.8.21-22)

For no other women shall seduce me, so that about you
I will not utter my just complaints, my life, at your threshold.

The *limen*, here, is used to reference both Propertius' faithfulness towards Cynthia and her promiscuity and infidelity in spite of his devotion. That we are to see this treachery in terms of sexual infidelity is made clear by *corrumpere* – a term used, here, to suggest the sexual seduction to which Propertius claims immunity and for which Cynthia has now fallen.⁶²

⁶⁰ Debrohun, *Roman Propertius*, p. 128. The *limen* represents, for example, exclusion and inclusion, fidelity, sexual satisfaction or denial, sexual rivalry and the beginning or end of a love affair.

⁶¹ The symbolism is not consistent in terms of which side of the *limen* represents fidelity and which side represents infidelity. Nevertheless, the distinction remains. Fourteen of the seventeen occurrences of *limen* (not including the two in 4.9) signify the boundary between promiscuity and faithfulness or appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour – 1.4.22; 1.8.22; 1.13.34; 1.14.19; 1.16.3, 22 (where 1.16.3 represents propriety in comparison to the promiscuity of 1.16.22); 1.18.12; 2.6.24; 2.6.37; 2.7.9; 3.3.47; 3.25.9; 4.1.146; 4.8.84. On the other occasions, the *limen* represents respite from a troubled love (1.5.13), impiety to the gods (3.13.51) and betrayal (for love) (4.4.2). Only on one occasion (3.13.51), then, does the *limen* represent a context wholly divorced from love/sex. Although some manuscripts have *sub limine* at 2.25.17, others have *sublimine* and *sub lumine* – given the discrepancies and the fact that many editors adopt Langermann's conjecture *crimine* for *limine*, here (see, for example, Camps, *Book II*, n. 17, p. 172, who has a brief discussion on the matter), I have chosen to disregard this (possible) occurrence of *limen* in my synopsis. Nonetheless, if *limen* is accepted at 2.25.17, it functions as a boundary between fidelity and infidelity.

⁶² For the sexual connotations of *corrumpere*, see Adams, J. N., *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Duckworth, London, 1982, pp. 199, 219 and 223.

Later in the first book, the *limen* specifically symbolises Gallus' many promiscuous love affairs and deceitful behaviour towards the women he seduces. Indeed, Gallus is famous for his poor treatment of women (*dum tibi deceptis augetur fama puellis*, 'while your fame grows for the girls you have deceived', 1.13.5) and promiscuity (*certus et in nullo quaeris amore moram*, 'and you deliberately seek a delay in no love', 1.13.6, *tibi uulgaris istos ... amores*, 'those promiscuous affairs of yours', 1.13.11). When he finally falls in love (with Cynthia, it seems), his previous promiscuity is defined in terms of the *limen*:

tu uero quoniam semel es periturus amore,
utere: non alio limine dignus eras. (1.13.33-34)

But since you are about to die of love this time,
Enjoy it: you were not worthy of the other thresholds.

The *limen*, on this occasion, represents Gallus' many previous sexual conquests. On another occasion, when professing his faithfulness to Cynthia, Propertius invokes the *limen* as a symbol of his fidelity:

sic mihi te referas, leuis, ut non altera nostro
limine formosos intulit ulla pedes. (1.18.11-12)

So may you come back to me, fickle one, as no other
Girl has carried her pretty feet across my threshold.

In this context, the *limen* specifically represents the boundary between fidelity and infidelity.

The juxtaposition of two elegies in Propertius' second book provides further insight into the sexual symbolism of the *limen*. Bemoaning infidelity and promiscuity among the inhabitants of Rome (2.6.21-22), Propertius recalls the famed fidelity of Alcestis and Penelope:

felix Admeti coniunx et lectus Vlixis,
et quaecumque uiri femina limen amat! (2.6.23-24)

Lucky Admetus' wife and Ulysses' bed,
And every woman who loves her man's threshold!

The *limen* in this instance symbolises a wife's fidelity. Propertius, in this elegy, thinks of Cynthia as a kind of wife (*semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris*, 'always you will be my (girl)friend, always a wife to me', 2.6.42), yet in the face of the disregard for fidelity in contemporary Rome (2.6.25-26, 35-36) he worries about Cynthia's faithfulness:

quos igitur tibi custodes, quae limina ponam,
quae numquam supra pes inimicus eat? (2.6.37-38)

What guards, therefore, could I place for you, what barrier
That an enemy foot could never pass over?

Here, the *limen*, once more, represents the line between (Cynthia's) fidelity and infidelity.

The next elegy in the second book (2.7) portrays the *limen* as representative of the boundary between marital and extramarital love/sex. Upon the withdrawal of a proposed (and unnamed) law that apparently would have forced Propertius to marry and abandon his affair with Cynthia (2.7.1f.), Propertius proclaims his defiance of the (now withdrawn) law:⁶³

nam citius paterer caput hoc discedere collo
quam possem nuptae perdere more faces,

⁶³ The main 'evidence' for this law comes from this elegy. For some time scholars considered that the law in question was a forerunner of Augustan marriage legislation, yet this claim has been refuted by Badian, E., 'A Phantom Marriage Law.' *Philologus* 129, 1985, 1, pp. 82-98. Badian's argument is generally accepted as decisive. Note, however, that James, S. L., *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003, pp. 229-231, still adheres to the former view.

aut ego transirem tua limina clausa maritus,
 respiciens udis prodita luminibus. (2.7.7-10)

For I would sooner allow this head leave my neck
 Than lose love's torches to a wife's behest,
 Or pass by your closed doorway as a husband,
 Looking back at it, betrayed, with damp eyes.⁶⁴

In this particular case, the *limen* symbolises the boundary between marital fidelity and infidelity; Propertius would no longer be able to cross Cynthia's *limen* and still remain faithful to his wife – accordingly, he rejects marriage. In fact, he would rather die than enter into a respectable Roman marriage and be forced to abandon his affair with Cynthia.

Another of Propertius' elegies presents the *limen* as the boundary between (marital) infidelity and faithfulness.⁶⁵ Calliope reproaches Propertius for attempting to address more serious themes in his poetry (3.3.37f.) and makes clear to him the poetic role that he must play:

'quippe coronatos alienum ad limen amantis
 nocturnaeque canes ebria signa fugae,
 ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas,
 qui uolet austeros arte ferire uiros.' (3.3.47-50)

'For of garlanded lovers at another's threshold
 And drunken signs of nocturnal escapes, you will sing,
 So through you he may learn to charm out locked away girls,
 Whoever wants to artfully outwit strict men/husbands.'

⁶⁴ It is unclear exactly what is the sense of *nuptae perdere more faces* (2.7.8); see Camps, *Book II*, n. 8, pp. 98-99, Lee, n. 8, p. 145 and Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 8, p. 231.

⁶⁵ Whether or not Propertius is to provide instruction on how to commit adultery, here, is dependant upon the translation of *uir* ('man' or 'husband', 3.3.50). What is clear is that the *puellae* in question, as Camps, *Book III*, n. 47, p. 68, puts it, 'belong to other men'. Both Goold, p. 263 and Lee, p. 75, translate *uiros* (3.3.50) as 'husbands'.

Not only in this case, then, does the *limen* represent the boundary between fidelity and infidelity, but by referring to the men who must be outwitted as *uiri* ('men' or 'husbands', 3.3.50), Propertius refuses to rule out the possibility that the reader is to imagine an adulterous situation.

In the first elegy of Propertius' final book, Horos – who also denounces Propertius' desire to address loftier themes in his poetry (4.1.71f.) – speaks of the futility of attempting to lock away a girl determined to cheat:

‘nec mille excubiae nec te signata iuuabunt
limina: persuasae fallere rima sat est.’ (4.1.145-46)

‘A thousand guards will not help you, nor a sealed
Threshold: a chink is enough for a girl determined to cheat.’

Again, the *limen* symbolises the boundary between fidelity and transgression.

Interestingly, the elegy that immediately precedes 4.9 ends with a scene involving a *limen*. With Cynthia having travelled to Lanuvium on an erotic dalliance under the pretence of attending the rites of Juno Sospita (*causa fuit Juno, sed mage causa Venus*, ‘the excuse was Juno, but the real reason was Venus’, 4.8.16),⁶⁶ Propertius decides upon his own amorous excursion with girls named Phyllis and Teia (4.8.27-34). When Cynthia catches him with them (4.8.51f.), she puts the girls to flight, berates Propertius and enacts some sort of ritual purification:

dein quemcumque locum externae tetigere puellae,
suffiit, ac pura limina tergit aqua. (4.8.83-84)

Then, every place those girl intruders touched,
She fumigates and she scrubs the threshold with pure water.

⁶⁶ Venus, here, of course, represents erotic love or sex.

The *limen* on this occasion, once again, functions as a signifier of sexual (in)fidelity. The fact that this particular reference occurs at the end of the elegy preceding 4.9 provides the strongest suggestion – particularly when viewed in conjunction with the other examples of *limen* in the Propertian corpus – that the reader is to interpret the *limen* of the grove of Bona Dea similarly.

Not only, then, does the *limen* of the grove of Bona Dea advertise the grove's elegiac context and designate the space within as private by demarcating the boundary between the public and private realm, it also defines the grove specifically in terms of erotic love/sex. Furthermore, in this latter context, the *limen* expressly represents the boundary between fidelity and infidelity, faithfulness and promiscuity and appropriate and inappropriate sexual relations.

With the nature of the water within the grove and of the grove, itself, now established we can turn our attention to Hercules' actions in the Bona Dea episode from the viewpoint of our hypothesis that Hercules, here, functions as an exemplar for Augustus and his attempts at social and moral reform and poetic control.

If the spring within the grove of Bona Dea and, indeed, the goddess's grove itself, represent elegy, elegiac themes, poetic inspiration and the private realm in the context of erotic love, how are we to interpret Hercules' actions in attempting to gain, and eventually achieving, access to the waters contained within the grove in an allegorical sense?

While no specific mention is made of either Augustus' moral legislation or the increasing pressure upon poetic freedom in the Bona Dea episode or, for that matter, in 4.9 in general, the actions of the *princeps* are intimated through allusion and allegorical representation. We noted that the Hercules/Cacus episode offers a paradigmatic representation of Octavian's defeat of Antony at the battle of Actium through purely contextual or allusive means – that is, without making any explicit reference in the text to Octavian, Antony or the battle itself.⁶⁷ In the Bona Dea episode, too, Augustus' actions are similarly represented through contextual allusion and allegory.

In 19 BC, Augustus became overseer of morals and in the following year he enacted the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* –

⁶⁷ Fox, 'Propertius 4.9', p. 160.

the former regulating acceptable marriage partners for senators and their families and other freeborn citizens alike; the later aiming to suppress unacceptable non-marital sexual relations such as adultery and *stuprum*.⁶⁸ The law concerning adultery and other such sexual behaviour brought private sexual practice and misbehaviour – hitherto matters to be dealt with or regulated within the private realm – into the public sphere and punished those found guilty of breaking the law.⁶⁹ Given that the fourth book of Propertius' elegies was (most likely) published in 16 BC – the latest datable reference is to 16 BC with the submission of the Sygambri (4.6.77) and the consulship of P. Cornelius Scipio (4.11.66) – the beginning of Augustus' moral crusade and the introduction of the controversial *leges Iuliae* occurred during the composition of Propertius' last book.⁷⁰

The Julian marriage and adultery laws caused quite a stir in Rome. According to Suetonius, there was open revolt concerning the marriage laws in particular (*Aug.* 34) and despite certain amendments, the *equites* held public protests. Tacitus, too, speaks of the intrusive nature of the laws and remarks that the laws were more invasive and destructive than the vices that they were aimed at suppressing ever were (*Ann.* 3.25 and 27). Indeed, the laws were, he claims, unfair (*Ann.* 3.27) and overly intrusive (*Ann.* 3.28). It is these particular pieces of moral legislation and Augustus' growing interference in the private realm that Propertius has in his sights in the Bona Dea episode.

Hercules' actions in bursting into the grove of Bona Dea reflect the *princeps*' own intrusion into the private realm and into the private (sexual) world of Roman citizens. Augustus' moral legislation of 18 BC aimed to suppress or regulate the very sorts of behaviour that typify the relationship of the elegiac *amator* and his *puella(e)*. Additionally, the legislation hoped to promote the kind of behaviour that the *amator* refuses to conform to or endorse. It is this elegiac world – a world of sexual promiscuity and infidelity – that is symbolised, as we have seen, by the grove of Bona Dea.⁷¹ The

⁶⁸ See McGinn, T. A. J., *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 70-72 for the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and pp. 140f. for the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*. Also, Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, pp. 128f.

⁶⁹ See McGinn, pp. 141f., concerning the punishment and measures taken against sexual misbehaviour prior to the introduction of the *leges Iuliae*.

⁷⁰ The latest date of reference in Propertius' third book is 23-22 BC with the death of Marcellus (3.18). For dating of the fourth book, see, for example, Camps, *Book IV*, p. 1 and Richardson, *Propertius*, pp. 11-12.

⁷¹ It is with no little irony and humour, of course, that Propertius depicts the grove of Bona Dea – a goddess associated with chastity – as a world of sexual promiscuity.

legislation provided for punishment or penalties for sexual relations between certain classes of Roman citizens and *libertini* with a particular focus on marriage and adultery. The Propertian *amator* engages in a sexual relationship with a *puella* of uncertain status and professes to teach how to seduce other men's women and to instruct women how to cheat their men. The legislation also aimed at promoting and encouraging marriage and childbirth, particularly among the upper classes. Propertius, or his poetic persona, denounces marriage in favour of continuing his relationship with a *puella* of uncertain social standing – a *puella* who seemingly he is unable to marry (presumably because of her status). Furthermore, he refuses to father children:

unde mihi patriis natos praebere triumphis?
nullus de nostro sanguine miles erit. (2.7.13-14)

Why should I offer sons for the triumphs of my fatherland?
There will be no soldier from my blood.⁷²

Within this erotic context, then, Hercules' actions symbolise Augustus' attempts at moral reform. Hercules gate-crashes (literally) into the elegiac world of the grove against the wishes of those within, drains the spring and imposes laws that segregate the sexes:

at postquam exhausto iam flumine uicerat aestum,
ponit uix siccis tristia iura labris. (4.9.63-64)

But after he had subdued his heat with the stream now drained,
He put in place stern laws with lips scarcely dry.

'haec nullis umquam pateat ueneranda puellis,
Herculis aeternum ne sit inulta sitis.' (4.9.69-70)

⁷² There is some ambiguity in this couplet arising from the possible interpretations of *unde*; see Berry, M. J., 'Propertian Ambiguity and the Elegiac Alibi,' in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XII. Latomus Collection 287*, C. Deroux (Ed.), Brussels, 2005, pp. 195-98.

‘This [altar] must never be open to be worshipped by any girl,
Lest Hercules’ thirst be forever unavenged.’

There is a remarkably similarity between Hercules’ actions, here, and those of the *princeps*. Augustus intrudes uninvited into the private sexual and marital lives of the Roman people with his moral legislation – legislation that met with public opposition. Just like Hercules, he bursts into the private realm and lays down laws that segregate the sexes (of certain social classes). Such an interpretation is supported by the claim that Hercules *manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem* (‘sanctified the world cleansed by his hands’, 4.9.73). *Sancire* can, in addition to ‘sanctify’, mean to enact laws, to prescribe by law and to make punishable by law. In the context of the moral legislation, also, it is important to remember that Hercules is the offspring of an adulterous liaison between Alcmena and Jupiter and that Augustus, himself, is said to have committed adultery on numerous occasions.

Also targeted is the growing restriction upon poetic freedom apparent at this time in the *princeps*’ rule. The ‘second Augustan period’ beginning around 20 BC sees a more direct and demonstrative exercise of power on behalf of the *princeps* and this trend coupled with the fall from favour of the poets’ great patron, Maecenas, is manifest in poetry from this period. Perhaps the influence is most visible in the later works of Horace – the last book of the *Odes*, for example – and Propertius – the fourth book.⁷³ Elegy was particularly vulnerable (especially following the introduction of Augustus’ moral legislation) due to the antithetical stance – one that is opposed to traditional Roman values – adopted by the elegiac *amator* and the personal nature of the poetry wherein it is almost impossible to divorce the *amator*/persona from the poet himself.⁷⁴ Hercules’ actions in bursting into the grove that is defined in an elegiac context and draining the spring that specifically represents elegiac inspiration symbolise Augustus’ growing intrusions upon poetic freedom. Indeed, Propertius publishes no more poetry after the fourth book and this final book offers a very different type of elegy in thematic terms

⁷³ For an excellent overview of the situation with regard to Propertius, see Lee, G., *Propertius. The Poems*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, pp. xiv-xvii.

⁷⁴ For a detailed discussion of the antithetical stance adopted by the *amator* and the issue of *persona*, see Berry, pp. 204f.

from the earlier books that are more typically erotic. Supporting such a reading is the fact that a *uates* is, indeed, punished in this elegy (*magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada uates*, ‘at great cost did the seer, Tiresias, look upon Pallas, 4.9.57). While *uates* in this context means ‘seer’ or ‘prophet’, it can, of course, also mean ‘poet’.

Although Augustus’ attempts at moral and poetic censorship may appear to be separate issues, for Propertius both sexual and poetic censorship amount to the same thing, given that the lifestyle he leads and advocates runs counter to traditional Roman morality and, more importantly, counter to the moral legislation of 18 BC. Following the *leges Iuliae* to speak of, or, more specifically, advocate the very type of behaviour that the legislation attempts to curb is almost as dangerous or subversive as actually engaging in the outlawed behaviour. Yet Propertius advocates crossing, and teaches women how to cross, the very boundaries (*limina*) that Augustan legislation strives to put in place. He does, in fact, claim that erotic love (*Venus*) knows or respects no boundaries in the face of legislation that puts in place boundaries governing appropriate sexual behaviour:

illa neque Arabium metuit transcendere limen
nec timet ostrino, Tulle, subire toro. (1.14.19-20)

[Venus] is not afraid to transgress the Arabian threshold
Nor does she fear to mount the purple couch.⁷⁵

Given the fact that the legislation attempts to set boundaries governing appropriate sexual behaviour, to assert that Venus (erotic love) is not able to be contained by boundaries (*limina*) obviously becomes a more subversive and dangerous proposition that it once was.

The Propertian *amator*, then, eschews marriage, engages in sexual behaviour with women of dubious or uncertain social status and in some cases comes dangerously close to promoting adultery. He urges women to engage in sexual behaviour with men other than their partner and teaches men to aid these women in deceiving their men/husbands in

⁷⁵ *Arabium* ... *limen* seems to mean something like ‘a rich man’s doorstep’; see Richardson, *Propertius*, n. 19, p. 185.

order to engage in sexual infidelity. Furthermore, the elegiac lifestyle is anti-war and anti-children (2.7.13-14). The elegiac world of Propertius' poetry is the world of promiscuous and unfaithful *puellae*. Given that the *leges Iuliae* of 18 BC targeted all of these practices, elegy in the traditional, erotic style obviously becomes a more difficult proposition.

Hercules, therefore, a famous Augustan paradigm, defeats his rival in a battle that is well established as an allegorical representation of Actium. He then attempts to soften his image, undergoes a titular transformation and turns his attention to a grove and spring that represents the private individual space and sexual and poetic freedom. He forces his way, despite opposition, into this private realm – a realm that is specifically portrayed in terms of erotic love – and imposes laws that segregate the sexes. There is, indeed, a strong degree of correlation between the actions of Hercules and the *princeps*.

Thus the Bona Dea episode, despite presenting difficulties in terms of interpretation, shares a number of thematic and linguistic similarities with the preceding Hercules/Cacus episode and, accordingly, the themes of the former episode – the most notable theme being the paradigmatic status of Hercules – provide the key to interpreting the latter. Read from this perspective, Propertius' account of Hercules' encounter with the worshippers of Bona Dea provides a fascinating critique of Octavian's transformation into Augustus and his attempts at moral legislation and poetic and sexual censorship.

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